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Dance and Dancers

MAY 1959

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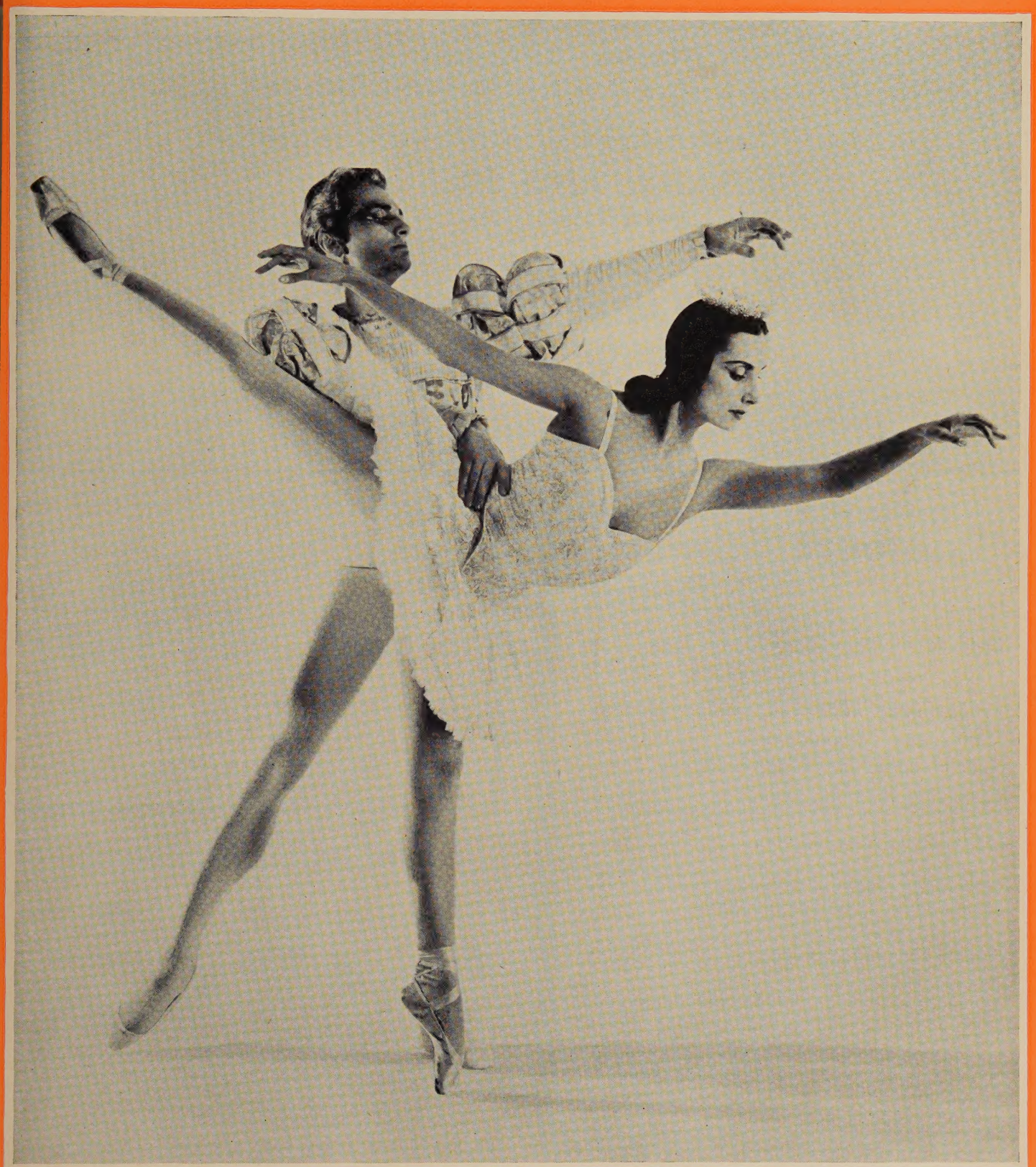

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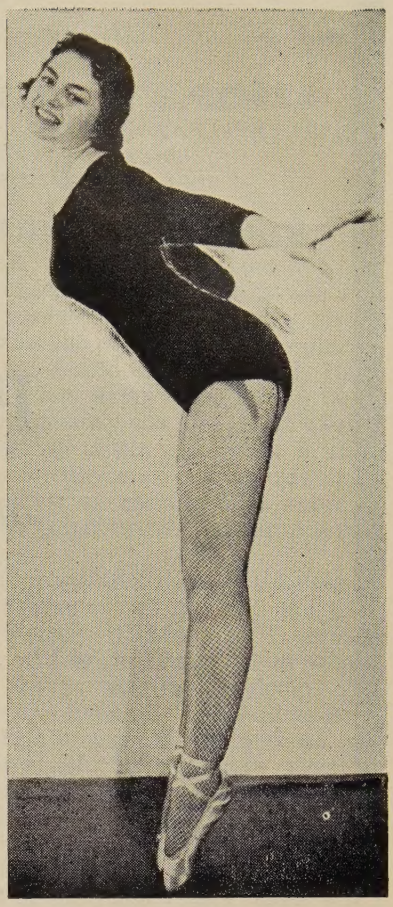

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Personality of the Month

Photo : Lido.

EUGENIE TOUMANOVA

OF all the characters behind the world of ballet that of the ballet mother is the one that lends herself most readily to barbed shafts from the pencil of the caricaturist and from the pen of the writer. If any of what one hears is to be believed it would seem that the fighting and scrapping amongst these matrons backstage makes the performances on-stage pale into insignificance. It was once told how a director, fed up to the teeth with these maternal carryings-on, arranged when his ballet company toured across America that all the mothers should be segregated in a special carriage all to themselves. There were apparently no lengths to which these ladies would not go in pushing the careers of their own darlings.

True as some of this may be one can hardly blame mothers for doing everything to further the cause of their offspring, especially as some of them are far too young and inexperienced to further their causes for themselves. When Eugenie Toumanova started on her career of becoming the century's foremost ballet mother she had every reason for fighting tooth and nail for her Tamara's career. The daughter of a noble Russian family she was forced to flee the revolution and during the flight gave birth to Tamara in a troop truck on the way to Vladivostock. The idea uppermost in the young mother's mind was that one day her daughter should be a ballerina. When later in Shanghai the little Tamara saw Pavlova dance, the pact was sealed and father, mother and daughter scraped everything together so as to get to Europe so that Tamara could study. In those days the going was hard and the fight that Eugenie put up for her daughter's career was a long struggle against almost overwhelming odds. Nor did the struggle cease when Tamara finally became one of the baby ballerinas in Colonel de Basil's company in 1932. It was around this time that Eugenie became known as "Mama" to the whole ballet world. With Tamara's growing maturity and eventual emergence as a beautiful woman, Mama's need to fight for her daughter diminished, but always she has been there — advising, criticising her every performance from the wings, making all her costumes and doing everything possible for Tamara's career. If anyone should think that this paints a picture of Mama as a kind of ferocious dragon then they would be getting quite a false impression — she is a warm-hearted, sweet and generous person and if her Tamara's career comes first and foremost who can blame her.

May 1959 10th YEAR OF PUBLICATION Vol. 10 No. 5

Dance and Dancers

Editor: PETER WILLIAMS *Associate Editor:* CLIVE BARNES
Assistant Editor : E. C. MASON
WORLD'S LARGEST SALE IN THE FIELD

REPLY TO A LADY FROM FRANCE

LUDMILLA TCHERINA came with her company to London, was seen but failed to conquer. This was all very sad and had she been content to slip out quietly, after her ballets had failed to attract the public for the scheduled length of the season, then we should all have quickly forgotten it as one of France's less happy exports and that would have been that. Unfortunately she thought fit to air her grievances about the British critics and public in the national press and her reported remarks if unanswered are likely, if believed, to create an entirely false impression of the relations between Great Britain and France on ballet matters.

Her most serious accusation was that there was jealousy in England and that the British critics did not like the company because it was French. If Madame Tcherina would cast her mind back she might remember in what country French ballet has always been most welcome — odd as it may seem, little old England. Les Ballets des Champs-Elysées, Roland Petit's companies and those of Janine Charrat, to mention only a few, have always received the fairest treatment from the press and adulation from the public. So much so that many people in this country only think that ballet gets praise when it happens to emanate from Paris. Not much sign of jealousy here ! I think that every member of the Paris Opéra ballet will say that they never got more just criticism than when they made their first historic visit to Covent Garden.

It would seem that Madame Tcherina has not studied ballet in England over the past ten years when she says that if we do not do a new thing we shall be eternally subjected to the classics. It is true of course that the British public do like the classics, but they also like new things provided that they are good — the last three words being the most operative ones. Even Covent Garden, the main target of Tcherina's criticisms, has produced works of a far more revolutionary nature and of far greater novelty than is the case with any other State-subsidized company.

What can Tcherina mean when she declares that one day England will do the same as her ballet and think it wonderful? Three of the works she showed were of a nature that said a lot for British politeness that they were sat through without complaint. The fourth — *The Lovers of Teruel* — which certainly had something, also never had any of the greatness of Charrat's *Les Algues,* which used many similar effects, such as the human voice, to get its point over. This latter ballet, French incidentally, was much appreciated by the insular British public.

No, this whole unfortunate outburst should act as a warning to every ballet director in the world that before attacking a public or those who criticise, they should look to see if the fault lies not in the stars (in this case the dancing stars could hardly be blamed) but in themselves.

Published by HANSOM BOOKS monthly on the 20th of the preceding month. By post: One year 27/-, Half-year 13/6, 2 years 50/-, 3 years 81/-. A loose leaf binder (value 12/6) to hold 24 copies is presented free with every three-year subscription. (Foreign: pay in sterling or by International Money Order or through agents listed in this number.) Binders for purchase are 12/6 by post. Back numbers from October 1951 available (except Nov., Dec. 1951, Jan., Mar. 1952, Jan., Feb., Apr., May, June 1953, July 1954, Jan., Apr. 1955, and Sept., Oct. 1956), price 2/3 each by post. 21 LOWER BELGRAVE STREET, LONDON, S.W.1. SLOane 0394. HANSOM BOOKS also publish every month MUSIC AND MUSICIANS, PLAYS AND PLAYERS, FILMS AND FILMING, BOOKS AND BOOKMEN, RECORDS AND RECORDING, BOOKGUIDE and TECHNICAL BOOKGUIDE and is proprietor of the SEVEN ARTS BOOK CLUB.

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WALTZERS APPEAR: As the clouds disperse, the spotlight picks out various couples dancing in a huge ballroom. The opening moment of Ashton's version of Ravel's La Valse.

La Valse

First given at the Teatro alla Scala, Milan, on February 1, 1958. First given by the Royal Ballet at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, on March 10, 1959. Poème Chorégraphique with music by Maurice Ravel. Choreography by Frederick Ashton. Designed by André Levasseur.

Cast

Principal Waltzers ..... DEIRDRE DIXON, CHRISTINE BECKLEY, JACQUELINE DARYL, GARY BURNE, RICHARD FARLEY, KEITH ROSSON

Waltzing Couples ..... MARGARET HILL, GEORGINA PARKINSON, BRENDA TAYLOR, DOREEN EASTLAKE, JENNIFER GAY, AUDREY HENDERSON, DEANNE BERGSMA, MONICA MASON, PATRICIA THOROGOOD, HYLDA ZINKIN, BRENDA BOLTON, ANN HOWARD, DOROTHEA ZAYMES, MAVIS OSBORN, DEBRA WAYNE, JULIE WOOD, GLYNIS ELLAMS, MARGARET LYONS.

DEREK RENCHER, RONALD PLAISTED, CHRISTOPHER NEWTON, PETRUS BOSMAN, ROBERT de WARREN, LAMBERT COX, MAURICE METLISS, CLIVE MOLLOY, BRYAN LAWRENCE, ADRIAN GRATER, DOUGLAS STEUART, BENJAMIN STEVENS, GRAHAM USHER, WILLIAM WILSON, JOHN SALE, STANLEY HOLDEN, KEITH MILLAND, MICHAEL COLEMAN.

Photographed by HOUSTON ROGERS

"Through whirling clouds couples of waltzers are faintly distinguished. The clouds disappear gradually; a huge ballroom is seen peopled with waltzing couples."—M. Ravel.

CHOREOGRAPHY

RAVEL'S *La Valse* has been like the song the Sirens sang, to contemporary choreographers. One by one nearly every major figure has succumbed to its enchanting lilt and menacing frenzy — Nijinska, Fokine, Lander, Balanchine, Massine and now, stepping in where angels have never feared to tread, comes Ashton. But — and this is only one of the difficulties — *La Valse* has surely nearly as many would-be choreographers as it has had listeners, for who among us is so unimaginative that he has not at some time listened to the score and peopled it with the waltzing couples of his dreams.

The ballet was commissioned by Diaghilev, and his subsequent rejection of it is now famous. The reason for his peremptory action is to be found in Lifar's biography of the impresario: "But all he [Diaghilev] had seen in this remarkable score was . . . merely a delightful valse. As ballet he considered it lacked scenic action, and so paralysed every possibility of choreographic development." But is it and does it? Ravel would most certainly have refuted both of these charges.

The composer gave the following brief scenario appended to his score: "Through whirling clouds couples of waltzers are faintly distinguished. The clouds disappear gradually; a huge ballroom is seen peopled with waltzing couples." But this, which is quoted on the Covent Garden programme, is only a part of the story. In his autobiographical sketch Ravel has written: "I have imagined this work as a kind of apotheosis of the Viennese waltz, which I have mixed in my mind with the impression of a terrifying and awe-inspiring vortex." One of Ravel's biographers, Madeleine Goss, describes it as "a picture of an epoch in which old values and dearly held ideals come crashing to earth in chaos; it portrays the torment of Ravel's own soul at this period."

The difficulty surely is that Diaghilev was partially right. This music, like *Bolero* before it, is basically a study in crescendo, and it clearly does lack "scenic action". Nijinska in her first important production of the ballet — in which Ashton, incidentally, himself appeared — was to an extent following the right instinct when she made it the basis for a plotless ballet. Ravel, apparently, disliked her conception intensely, but it was probably much truer to his intentions than some of the heavily dramatised ballets produced since by such choreographers as Lander and Massine.

For in basis what is here suggested is a semi-abstract impression, a symbol if you prefer it, of a beautiful, head-strong society in decay; a Viennese waltz, Vienna of 1855, an Imperial Court, a whirl of dancers, a *danse macabre* spinning faster and faster until overtaken — as the curtain falls on their penultimate ecstasy — by a holocaust. What is here is not a narrative but more of a descriptive statement.

Ashton originally undertook this *tour de force* last year when he was invited to mount the work for the ballet company of La Scala, Milan. In a sense he has followed Nijinska's example and conceived the work along plotless lines, although he has also adhered closely to Ravel's printed theme. There are no characters in this *poème choréographique* which Ashton has composed for twenty-one couples, three of whom are used as a solo *concertante* group.

Even after a choreographer has overcome the score's lack of action, he is still faced with Diaghilev's second gloomy prophecy that it would paralyse "every possibility of choreographic development". That the waltz simple possesses its own attraction and even spectacular appeal will be apparent to all who have seen formation groups of exhibition ballroom dances — but what we will accept in a ballroom would look tame stuff on a stage. Realising this, Ashton has made only sparing use of the conventional waltz steps, rightly choosing to match the impressionistic texture of the music with some bold brushwork of his own.

Ashton is old enough a hand at the choreographic plough never to be at a loss for steps, but rarely have I admired his ingenuity more than in *La Valse*. Never since the ballroom scene in *Apparitions* has he wrought such a beautiful thing out of fancified fancy dancing.

As the murmuring throb of the music opens the dancers are disclosed through a misty gauze, gently swaying with the music, then first one, then another, then a third girl is lifted as one chord after another breaks through, until finally all the girls are raised up as the ballroom comes to life and the waltz makes its first tentative appearance. The couples swirl in the mist, they form up in two lines, the boys with their backs to the girls, and gradually come together with groping hesitancy.

Groups of dancers coalesce only to be once more broken up into fragmentary groups, as they weave and counter-weave around one another. A group of six soloists move in and out of the throng, once or twice they are found alone in the ballroom, as the dance becomes more and more ardent and impassioned. At times the scene clears, only to be invaded once more by the relentless dancers. The girls go off leaving the boys alone spinning around and jumping as the tension of the dance increases. The momentum gathers force and the couples come together once more until the civilised veneer of the music is torn across by the orchestra's primitive cries and the dancers are left in a hectic maelstrom of movement as the curtain falls.

I suspect that Ashton's prime intention was to create a pretty, exquisitely tasteful *pièce d'occasion*, and he has nearly succeeded in only that. I think it quite probable that he saw in the music little more than is indicated in the composer's scenario printed on the score, and that "dancing on the edge of a volcano" was far removed from his original intention. But if this is so, then he has been betrayed, as it were, by his own musical sense, and in following Ravel with his choreography, has been led up a path in which first implicit and later quite explicit frenzy provides a sinister undertow to the ballet's surface charm.

The one difficulty of the piece which must remain unconquerable is its brevity. Balanchine attempted to solve this by tacking the *Valses Nobles et Sentimentales* to the beginning, and in so doing showed more courage than discretion, more theatricality than musicianship, for these two distillations of Schubert and Johann Strauss are basically worlds apart. Ashton has done nothing so foolhardy or, let it be said, so shrewd, with the unhappy result that we are making for the bars an almost indecently short time after we have sat down in our seats.

PRINCIPAL WALTZERS: Deirdre Dixon, in white, with Gary Burne. They are one of the three pairs of principals.

I also wonder whether Ashton has found the correct balance between his group of soloists and the *corps de ballet*. I cannot help feeling that the solo dancers have been given either too much or, alternatively, too little prominence. But this is a rather carping comment on a ballet that is full of felicity, and that shows its choreographer's skill at handling mass movement, which with its consistently inventive floor-patterns is almost as fluent as anything he has yet created. If not worn out early by over-repetition, it could well become a permanent part of the repertory. I hope so — it would be so nice to think of Diaghilev being wrong for once.

DANCING

IN effect this is a sort of concerto for *corps de ballet* and orchestra. The sextet of soloists — Deirdre Dixon and Gary Burne, Christine Beckley and Richard Farley, Jacqueline Daryl and Keith Rosson — have little more dancing to do than the rest, even though it is thrown into greater prominence. Deirdre Dixon revealed a beautifully pliant back and danced with gossamer lightness. She also had a sense of period style which her companions would have done well to have emulated. The other two girls were more than adequate, but tidier dancing would not have come amiss from the three boys. Rosson rivalled Burne's leap, and Farley's footwork was, if anything, cleaner than the others, although he must develop more strength in his *port de bras*, and his *doubles tours en l'air* were unfortunate.

The *corps de ballet* danced with just a shade more enthusiasm than polish. There were quite a few students in the large *ensemble*, and at times there was a little too much jostling than is desirable at an Imperial Ball. It is one thing to dance on the edge of a volcano, but quite another to fall over the side. But this should easily sort itself out with experience, and the big *ensemble* dance given to the male dancers was notably well done. Considering the difficulties Ashton used to have in getting a mere six boys up in the air together during the *pas de six* in *Les Rendezvous*, he can count himself very lucky that here the company was able to provide him with twenty-one boys all going up and coming down together — well nearly.

Clive Barnes.

MUSIC

WHEN Diaghilev in 1919 invited Ravel to follow *Daphnis and Chloë* with another score for ballet, the composer turned to a work he had sketched for two pianos some thirteen years earlier. It was "not very subtle", he had written to a friend then, "a big Waltz (yes!) in the form of a homage to the great Strauss — not Richard, the other one, Johann. You know what I feel for these wonderful rhythms and what I think of the exuberance of the dance compared to the Puritanism of the César Franck school. . . ."

But between the original idea and Diaghilev's commission the war intervened, leaving Ravel disillusioned and dejected. The character of *La Valse* correspondingly changed. It was still "nothing but a waltz" to Diaghilev when he received the score in 1920, and his refusal to produce it led to a permanent rupture between him and the composer. To Ravel, however, the music had become, as he later wrote, "a kind of apotheosis of the Viennese waltz, linked, in my mind, with the fantastic whirl of destiny".

The "choreographic poem", lasting only 12 minutes, is cast in two well-defined sections. Each is a linked chain of waltz themes growing from soft beginnings to a loud climax. But whereas the first section, climbing from deep in the basses as the clouds disperse to a typically happy-natured Viennese waltz, is exuberant and gay, the second *crescendo* is harsh and dissonant by contrast, growing louder and wilder and ending in discord.

It suggests that Ravel might well have had in mind a transformation from gaiety to tragedy, a deliberate or subconscious contrast between the lighthearted abandon of pre-war Vienna and its aftermath of futility and despair. If so, Ashton has chosen to ignore any such musical implications in his choreography, and the consistent exuberance of spirit in the dancing occasionally seemed

THE CORPS *BEGINS: Various couples in the* corps de ballet *get caught up in the rhythm of the waltz.*

to me at odds with the expressive undertones of Ravel's music.

Although the score is in no sense a major work, it is remarkable in its versatile exploitation of a single rhythm and its evocation of atmosphere. Unlike *Bolero,* which exhausts its rhythmic interest all too soon, *La Valse* sustains it almost throughout. The orchestral background is immediately suggestive of billowing velvet and lace, and the manner in which themes are suddenly "lit" or thrown into relief has all the rough brilliance and uncertain flickering of a gas chandelier.

Massine and Balanchine both tried to exploit the music's latent sense of drama; Ashton has been content to rely on Ravel's prodigious skill as a musical stage-manager, although perhaps not confidently enough. The orchestral playing under Hugo Rignold at the first performance was certainly lacking in confidence. It was competent, but there was little ease or carefree spontaneity about the rhythmic lilt and the tone was quite devoid of the lustre implicit in Ravel's ingenious orchestration.

Noël Goodwin.

DECOR

"I'M so pretty, oh so pretty . . ." sings a lady in *West Side Story*; "My dear, it's just too pretty and chic for all words," declared a willowy youth to his friend in rather disparaging tones as they mounted the stairway at Covent Garden after the first performance of *La Valse* in London. The difference — the American lady was pretty and proud of it: the English gentleman, like many another English lady and gentleman, recognised the presence of prettiness and chic but was ashamed of it. All rather typical of the insular attitude of our island race where we are apt to confuse prettiness with saccharine sugariness. It is also an attitude which the British adopt in an attempt to hide their inferiority complex about their lack of taste in these matters.

After all, this is supposed to be a grand ball and a grand ball is, or at least should be at its best, a pretty social occasion and not a sociological phenomenen. What André Levasseur has done is certainly not sugary but is as pretty and acceptable as the sudden presentation of a bunch of gorgeous Spring flowers on a cold and foggy March day. Ravel, in his notes on the work, asked for an elegant ball first seen through swirling clouds and, apart from the fact that it is difficult to see any cloud swirling going on, this is just what he has been given.

It would have been so easy for the draped grey marquee effect to have looked like those stage presentations which used to precede early talking picture performances in the cinemas of the 'thirties. But it is all given with such taste that there is never anything cheap and flashy about it. This great tent has been beautifully painted and almost appears to be a part of the sky, as though somebody had taken great handfuls of night and arranged them in symmetrical cascades. In the distance, stars twinkle in the unfolded sky and the only colour in the setting is provided by four footmen, immobile like caryatids in subdued plum and holding candalabra. From the ceiling, or could it be the sky, hang great glittering bunches of chandeliers.

The male dancers also are subdued and are all in black velvet Second Empire tail coats with elegant legs sheathed in black

PRINCIPALS IN THE SWING: Keith Rosson with Jacqueline Daryl, Gary Burne with Deirdre Dixon and Richard Farley with Christine Beckley in one of the few moments when the principals get separated from the rest of the waltzers.

THE LILT AND THE SWIRL: Above and below are pictures of the whole company caught up in the lilt of the infectious waltz time. These pictures give some idea of André Levasseur's beautiful costumes and how well they move with the dancers.

nylon. They have immense dignity and they self-effacingly frame their partners who are in grey, blue, turquoise, green and mushroom pink. But these colours are never obvious because they are overlaid with black net so that the general effect is of every imaginable tone of grey. Sometimes, for a flash, the basic colour is revealed in greater clarity, sometimes the stars on their skirts and bodices catch the light and then they seem to belong to the surrounding firmament. They subtly show up the three principal ladies, who are in sugar pink, white and buttercup yellow, and here I think the two most colourful of them could have been slightly toned-down with just one layer of black net — their colours are a shade too clear compared with their surroundings. The general effect, though sounding subdued, is in fact of great colour, and all the dresses with their long flattering body line and immense billowing skirts could only have been designed by a master *couturière.* Just the sort of ball which the great Worth might have created for the Empress Eugenie. There is a place in ballet for the art of the *couturière,* just as much as there is for the architect and the painter, and this was obviously the place and the occasion. The trouble is that few choreographers or artistic directors know just *when* the right ballet crops up for the right application of these people. Diaghilev caused a stir in the 'twenties, and many upraised hands in horror from the old-guard, when he employed the foremost *couturière* of the day to design the costumes for *Le Train Bleu.* What Chanel did was absolutely right because it was a sophisticated up-to-the-minute work. Since then the French have used their great fashion masters in ballet — Dior, Balmain and so on — not always on the right occasion. Levasseur worked for years with Dior and although he has since developed his theatre work far beyond the realms of the salons of fashion, he has retained all his original flair for beautifully clothing the human body. Ashton has shown great taste in the way he has used the particular genius of this designer in his creations.

The only fault I could find with the designing of the ballet was in the apparent lack of cloud effect, and it was not until a few nights later, when I was sitting nearer than on the first night, that I discovered that in actual fact there were clouds moving across the scene. They should be thrown up in greater clarity and this could easily be achieved by giving the first few seconds of the ballet with no lighting other than the cloud machine, then very slowly the chandeliers could be brought in and, equally slowly, a spot could catch the dancing couples. In this manner, the audience would, as in a dream, be led gently by the hand into the whirl and swirl of the Ravel-Ashton-Levasseur waltz.

Peter Williams.

PERFORMANCE DETAILS

Running Time

12 minutes.

Audience Reaction

9 calls on 1st night, none with the lights up. Polite reception by carriage trade gala audience, with a certain enthusiasm from the upper reaches of the house.

Press Reaction

6 stars — rave; 5 stars — enthusiastic; 4 stars — favourable; 3 stars — lukewarm; 2 stars — unfavourable; 1 star — pan.

Daily Express *****; *Daily Mail* *****; *Daily Telegraph* *****; *Financial Times* ******; *Manchester Guardian* *****; *News Chronicle* ***; *Observer* ***; *Sunday Times* ****; *The Times* ******.

OPENING AND CLOSING GROUP: In the centre group are Merle Park, Maryon Lane and Doreen Wells, being supported by Ronald Plaisted, Desmond Doyle, Richard Farley and Petrus Bosman. While Pirmin Trecu is on the ground.

Danses Concertantes

First given by the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet at Sadler's Wells Theatre, on January 18, 1955. First given by the Royal Ballet at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, on March 13, 1959. Music by Igor Stravinsky. Choreography by Kenneth MacMillan. Designed by Nicholas Georgiadis.

Cast

MARYON LANE — DESMOND DOYLE
PIRMIN TRECU
DOREEN WELLS — RICHARD FARLEY — MERLE PARK
with
DEIRDRE DIXON — BRENDA TAYLOR — GEORGINA PARKINSON
BRENDA BOLTON — DEBRA WAYNE — CHRISTINE BECKLEY
PETRUS BOSMAN — RONALD PLAISTED

Photographed by ROY ROUND

CHOREOGRAPHY

REVIVALISM is a chancy practise for a ballet company — the more so when the work to be revived was meant not only for another time but even for another place. Covent Garden has this season entered the resurrection business in a big way, and to the main with remarkable success. Already *La Fête Etrange* and *Harlequin in April* have been gratifyingly well translated from their old home in Rosebery Avenue to their new, more spacious, living quarters in Bow Street, and it was with interest and anticipation that I awaited the third newcomer. But I was in for a surprise.

The ill-wind that caused me to miss the first night brought with it the blessing that I was able to read many of my colleagues' notices of the ballet before seeing the production for myself — and I was also given quite a few eye-witness accounts. The latter were by no means as encouraging as the former, and equally depressing was a newspaper photograph showing three of the costumes — all frothy tutus and broad arrows — which gave me the impression that the designer had committed some form of artistic hara-kiri. Consequently I turned up for the second performance in a very proper state of heightened awareness, expecting both the worst and the best and looking forward to the ballet with the contradictory emotions that await an unopened telegram.

I was delighted with what I found, but fancy that I might have been less so had I not been forewarned about the costumes and had encountered the revival in the normal way of its first night.

Fortunately the costumes were not nearly so tasteless as they had appeared in the photograph, and in any case pre-knowledge had robbed them of the power to stun. I was also ready for the changes that had undoubtedly overtaken the ballet's atmosphere, and to anyone who knew the work in its previous version going to see it at Covent Garden for the first time, I can, from experience, repeat the phrase made famous by Tom Lehrer and the Boy Scouts: "Be Prepared!" Nevertheless, before passing on to discuss the ballet's choreography I feel compelled to point out that the ballet loses a lot from its present costumes and would like to associate myself with Peter Williams's comments later in the magazine.

However, what it has lost in the changes in design has been more than made good by the Covent Garden stage, which seems to have enhanced the choreography in a most unusual way. It is now, I think, a far better ballet here than it ever was at Sadler's Wells.

Noticing a number of marked amendments in the *pas de deux*, I got the initial impression that MacMillan had made widespread minor changes throughout the ballet, but being a little uncertain I took the unusual step of asking him what he had done. The disconcerting reply was "Nothing — except to the *pas de deux*", and I felt like echoing the celebrated retort of Brahms (Johannes not Caryl) by saying, "Any *fool* can see that!" But I bit back the answer — after all who would have been the fool — and contented myself with sobering reflections on the diceyness of ballet criticism.

But while I might have been wrong I was all the same right — it really is a better ballet at Covent Garden than it had been at Sadler's Wells. If we are *habitués* of one theatre or another we tend to think of the dimensions of a ballet as if they remained constant. It is rather the same with reproductions of pictures; you see a shrunken print of a painting and unquestioningly accept its size along with its shape. The day comes when you see the original and although its proportions are unaltered in relationship to themselves, the effect they make can be quite different. The rather cosy

print hanging in Aunt Muriel's hall takes on a very different aspect once it is seen that the original measures 12 ft. by 8 ft. The expansion and contraction of ballets — some physicist should make up a law about it — can yield no less interesting results. And normally there is one size-range for a ballet that is more "right" than any other.

In the usual run of events a ballet is at its best when seen on the size of stage for which it was first created. But there are far too many exceptions to this to prove any rule, and a great number of ballets, unlike human beings, only find their best proportions late in life. So it proved with *Danses Concertantes*.

One of the most remarkable things about the ballet is the way in which MacMillan has selected a choreographic style and effortlessly maintained it throughout the work. The whole thing hangs together as a piece and fits Stravinsky's score like a leotard. The bewildering and unflagging invention which jerked us up in our seats four years ago is today no less exciting. This is virtuoso choreography deriving from a rag-bag of sources and remaining distinctively brilliant, bright, sharp and indelibly memorable. It is choreographic small-talk abounding in the sort of audacious epigrams grudgingly, but delightedly, allowed to a young man of barely 24 who is trying to create an impression and experiencing no difficulty in succeeding.

Dance epigrams — that probably is the phrase for those curiously inconsequential gusts of gaiety, call it wit, burlesque or humour if you will, with which MacMillan enlivens his choreography. We find here the sort of crazy comedy of movement that was so endearing in the first part of Balanchine's *Bourrée Fantasque*.

Suddenly, for no reason at all, a group of boys become transformed into ponderously riding horsemen, who bounce across the stage a few times as if they were looking with mocking solemnity at the equestrian travellers of De Mille's *Rodeo* or Dollar's *The Duel*. Just as unexpectedly the ballerina breaks the flow of her neo-classical variation by an unexpected flat-footed shuffle that produces an odd effect of little-girlishness.

There are twists and quirks the whole way and never a dull moment. A *pas de trois* ends and the boy, with irrepressible cuteness, slides smartly off stage supporting both girls. The ballerina comes on and — hinting at heaven knows what Freudian recesses in the choreographer's mind — does a mask adagio with five suitors. The eye is constantly diverted by bewilderingly brisk changes of choreographic gear and kaleidoscopical shifts of dance patterns. But none of this has changed, yet the ballet itself is different. I wonder why?

When first produced at Sadler's Wells it was a chic, intimate ballet that faithfully — incredibly faithfully — mirrored Stravinsky's music. I remember at the time trying to analyse the various strands in MacMillan's choreographic thread, and trying to disentangle those various elements of jive, classicism and uninhibited fancy that went to make it up. In all this I overlooked, or rather failed to distinguish. one vital part of the choreography's make-up — "show-business". At the time I thought the opening and closing were "too slick", and at the time they were.

Looking at this revival, parts of the ballet reminded me strongly of the dance *ensembles* beloved of Hollywood musicals with their brash vitality and extrovert openness of movement. At Sadler's Wells these humorously stylised dance routines were cramped to the point of looking affected and even clumsily mechanical. The spaciousness of Covent Garden has endowed this side of the ballet with a quite fresh zest and freedom. The result is a ballet far less chic in its atmosphere, far less "clever" and sophisticated, yet more enjoyably successful.

It has also become a much grander ballet, and those places where it seems to be hinting with affectionate malice at a kind of parodied *Scènes de Ballet* — an idea probably inherent in the score — are thrown into far sharper focus. It should prove a wonderful acquisition to the repertory, and I was delighted to see a MacMillan/Georgiadis/Stravinsky ballet win such

PAS DE DEUX: *Three studies of Maryon Lane and Desmond Doyle in the beautiful* pas de deux.

general approbration and audience approval.

The story has been told that once when Sir Thomas Beecham was touring in Cleveland, Ohio, a local reporter asked him whether a certain Delius piece to be included in his forthcoming concert revealed the composer at his best. Sir Thomas is said to have replied: "No, but you will like it in Cleveland, Ohio." Is *Danses Concertantes* as good a ballet as *The Burrow*, or more pointedly, *Agon*? No, but you will like it at Covent Garden.

DANCING

THIS is, of necessity, a less subtle production of the ballet than formerly, and it gets a less subtle performance. The difference could possibly be seen most easily in considering Maryon Lane, the only survivor, apart from Brenda Bolton in the *corps de ballet*, from the original Sadler's Wells cast. In both places Lane achieved a minor triumph with her dancing, yet the air of mystery she conveyed at Sadler's Wells nearly disappeared in the new production, although her performance proved more exciting than ever. She showed all the old perky elegance — that distinctive *gamine* classicism that is the hallmark of her dancing — yet here it was sharper edged and more dazzling. The one moment that failed to come over as effectively as before was in her mask dance, but this was almost entirely due to the absence of the black gloves with which she so cleverly used to suggest a mask.

She was admirably partnered by Desmond Doyle, and together they went through the complex intricacies of the newly revised *pas de deux* with singular ease. Doyle also danced well, as did Pirmin Trecu, although Trecu could not quite get the measure of Britton's old part. The rôles first created by Sara Neil and Annette Page originally had an almost languid smartness. The newcomers, Merle Park and Doreen Wells, missed this quality, yet their dancing — like Trecu's — seemed engagingly bright and infectious. Wells in particular showed a beautifully coltish friskiness, and like the majority of the cast had no difficulty with the music or the choreography's off-beat timing. Of the remaining boys Richard Farley in the *pas de trois* seemed to be oppressed by a sense of occasion, and was not really adequate. However, there is clearly a good deal of talent lurking beneath the shell of his inexperience, which time should bring to the fore. The remaining two boys, Petrus Bosman and Ronald Plaisted, danced extremely well, and the *corps de ballet* of six girls was notable for its clean athleticism and musical response. **C. B.**

PAS DE TROIS: *Merle Park, Richard Farley and Doreen Wells in the extremely witty* pas de trois.

VARIATION: Pirmin Trecu in the brilliant solo which was originally created for Donald Britton.

MUSIC

WHEN Sir Arthur Bliss presented the gold medal of the Royal Philharmonic Society to Stravinsky at a London concert five years ago he said that future generations "would have to reckon with the disturbance of his personality". The phrase stuck in my mind as a far more valid comment on the composer's unique position in contemporary music than all the uncritical eulogies of his most fervent admirers, and I was sharply reminded of it at the production of *Danses Concertantes* at Covent Garden.

A disturbance of personality is precisely what MacMillan has done in his choreographic settings of Stravinsky. To what extent ballet may in turn have to reckon with *him* is, perhaps, too soon to say, and is, in any case, outside my province here. But to me MacMillan's remarkable flair for realising and complementing Stravinsky's music in creative dancing is not the least of his achievements.

It matters little whether Balanchine was right in asserting that *Danses Concertantes* was composed with the theatre in mind, or whether Stravinsky was right when he later denied it (although it would be interesting to know why he did so). The fact is that the music is fundamentally a conception of dancing in sound, but dancing of a new and — here we are again — "disturbing" kind. Just as Stravinsky in his early works was the first composer to relate ballet to a serious world of imagination and satire, so he was also the first to suggest in musical terms the idea of "pure" dancing.

He did so with the score of *Danses Concertantes*, completed in 1942 soon after he had gone to live in Hollywood. In form and idiom it marked yet another new departure for a composer who has consistently sought original ways of renewing himself. Musically it was a style that reached consummation in the magnificent *Symphony in Three Movements* of 1945, but also the nucleus of one from which *Agon* has since been derived. I am inclined to think *Agon* a superior score just as I believe MacMillan's ballet to that outshines his earlier works in creative imagination, but that is not to gainsay the intrinsic merit of the music of *Danses Concertantes*.

It is laid out in the form of three principal movements framed by a *Marche-Introduction* and a *Marche-Conclusion*. An extended *pas d'action* shaped like a rondo is distinguished by displaced accents, irregular rhythmic development and brilliant

ENSEMBLE: Ronald Plaisted, Doreen Wells and Petrus Bosman with the corps de ballet *in one of the many inventive ensembles in which the ballet abounds.*

instrumental decoration. The central theme and four variations is the core of the work, with lyrical, robust and serpentine episodes immediately suggestive of dance patterns. An appealing *pas de deux* for oboe and clarinet, with slightly grotesque contrasting sections, precedes the closing march.

In his detailed and illuminating "Ballet Perspective" (*Dance and Dancers,* March 1959), Clive Barnes quoted MacMillan's attraction to the "humorous and witty" quality in the music and to a certain "circus element" in it. The music is by no means lacking in wit and ebullience, but I am not sure that the emphasis in this respect is quite so pointed as the choreography implies.

Part of the music's individual character derives from its unusual orchestration — restricted to single woodwind and brass (except for two horns) and to fourteen strings only without second violins. I could not see how closely the orchestra used at Covent Garden kept to this prescription, but I do know that its playing under Hugo Rignold was little short of abominable. However few or many of the musicians were temporary replacements for the "Bow Street Philharmonic" while the regulars were on tour with the opera company. the sluggish attack, insecure rhythm and frequently perverse phrasing betrayed an abject incomprehension of Stravinsky's purpose. So long as the Royal Ballet administration tolerates one and the same type of musical approach to all ballet, whether it be Delibes or Stravinsky, the management is not fulfilling its obligations towards either the artists or the public, and the company's prestige suffers accordingly.

Noël Goodwin.

DECOR

ON January 18, 1955, a new designer burst, more literally than is usual, upon the ballet firmament. For his first commissioned ballet Kenneth MacMillan had made the remarkable discovery of a Greek designer, then a student at the Slade School, and Nicholas Georgiadis splashed his excitingly loaded palette upon British ballet. Since that ballet, *Danses Concertantes,* his palette has become less loaded and more selective, reaching heights of distinguished designing in the earth and slime of *The Burrow* and in the glow of Etruscan sunlight of *Agon.* Parallel with his work for the theatre has been his growing mastery as a painter culminating in a recent highly successful exhibition of paintings, which had nothing to do with the theatre, at the Redfern Gallery. To my way of thinking, Georgiadis has made as great a contribution to ballet designing as did Tchelitchev and Clavé in their time and from me no assessment could be higher.

When I heard that *Danses Concertantes* would be re-mounted for the company at Covent Garden, my feelings were mixed. That it would enjoy a success and be praised by those who were cool about it in Rosebery Avenue and by those who loathed *Agon* seemed to me to be a foregone conclusion. But when both choreographer and designer have matured together in such a naturally ascending curve over the years, the revival of a work which was, after all, little more than the first tentative shufflings of both creators seemed to me to open up dangers that the development of both artists would be thrown out of their true perspective. However, even an early exercise in a collaboration of Stravinsky with MacMillan and Georgiadis is better than nothing of this kind in the repertory at all.

It was in this mood that I approached the revival of *Danses Concertantes* at Covent Garden, but nothing prepared me for the stunning shock I received as the curtain arose. The shock did not come from the setting, which had been simplified much to its advantage. Now it is far less fussy and the wings in yellow, greeny-blue and blue, though atrociously painted and utterly lacking in texture, still had a sombre magnificence. As also did the olive-green cutcloth with its two wingéd sphinxes spot-lit in a warmer pink, and the cerulean blue backing which gives its mysterious distance. On this setting the black calligraphic lines were less confused and the whole environment had shape. The only shock from the lighting was an agreeable one because William Bundy had lit it better than any

Continued on page 26

STARFISH GROUPS: The corps de ballet *in an unusual formation.*

ADVICE FROM THE PRINCIPALS : Left, Nicholas Georgiadis discusses the design shown on the opposite page with Phillip Prowse. Right, Peter Snow looks over the shoulder of Ian Spurling, whose designs for Apollon Musagète *were shown in last month's article. Photos : Robert Belton.*

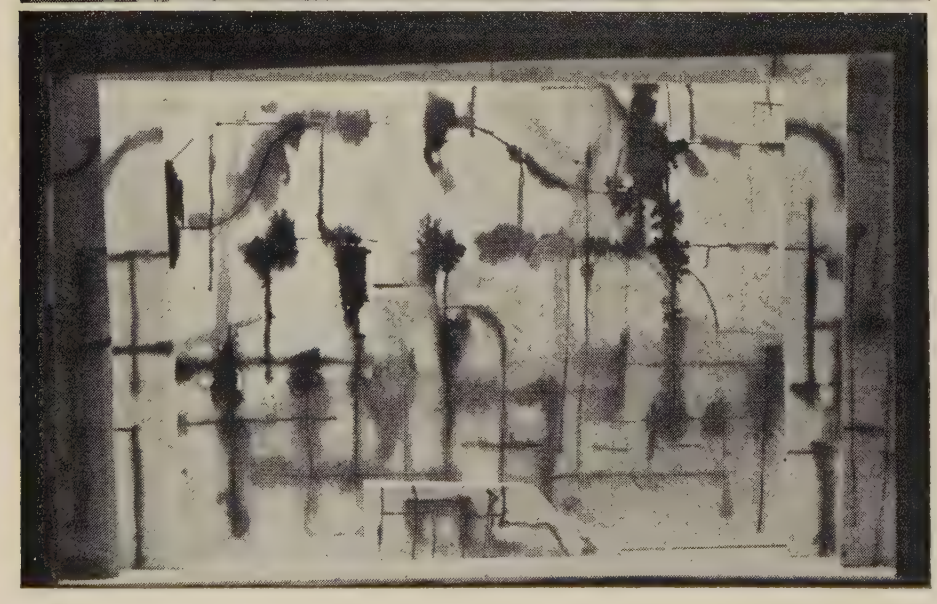
An Experiment in Ballet Design

(part 2)

by PETER WILLIAMS

LAST month, I told you about an experiment in ballet designing that was being carried out by the design section of the Slade School in London University. The students were set a subject — the Stravinsky/Balanchine Apollon Musgète **— and told to design the costumes, scenery, build a model and generally prepare the whole designing as if it were to be used in an actual production on the stage. In this same issue I wrote about the work of two students — Pauline Whitehouse and Ian Spurling — here is an assessment of the work of some of the other students.**

ALTHOUGH *Apollon Musagète* is essentially a Greek classical myth it also lends itself to all kinds of different treatments as a myth can be placed into almost any period without it losing much of its force, just as great painters have seen the stories of the Bible in a dressing and environment contemporary to their own time. For instance, Judy Wood, whose model you see above on the left, saw the birth of Apollo, his presentation to the muses and his ascent to Parnassus as an episode in a circus. The opening when Leto gives birth to Apollo takes place in a little turquoise curtained theatre. This opens out into the main scene, which is mainly buttercup yellow and orange with rostrums and ladders to give interesting levels to the choreography. Apollo finally ascends to Parnassus up a glittering rope ladder which is suddenly caught by the light. Judy Wood saw Apollo as a Chinese acrobat and the muses as circus ballerinas in white and mauve. The whole conception was extremely original and the only fault I could find was that her colour sense tended to be pallid. This was all right for her setting, but I



TWO IDEAS FOR APOLLON : *Middle, Judy Wood's model places the environment for* Apollon *in a circus background. Below left, John Dyall sees the ballet in a mauve, black and grey abstract setting. Photos : Robert Belton.*

doubt whether her costumes would cause any great impact in the theatre.

In complete contrast, John Dyall, whose model is at the bottom of page 14, saw the whole ballet in a completely abstract way. I liked his mauve and grey setting with its smudged lines which formed an interesting and balanced composition and could present a spectacle of ancient mystery if extremely well lit. Unfortunately he had not really developed his idea enough to make it possible to see his conception as a whole and I am inclined to think that he is too much a painter *in* the theatre rather than a painter *of* the theatre and that his ability as a painter needs to be applied more to the theatre's requirements.

Yet another complete contrast comes with Phillip Prowse, whose setting and two muse costumes can be seen on the right. Here is someone who is not first and foremost a painter but who has a strong decorative sense and also an understanding of theatre. He sees the Apollo myth in terms of the Yellow Book, Beardsley, Wilde and Edwardian decadence. His setting with its white sky, blue architectural suggestions, black rostrum and grey winged pillars has perspective and is effective in a rather smart way. The muses are in decayed green and blue and their towering headdresses and dripping jewels made one think that had Prowse designed the Apollo costume (illness prevented him from finishing his designs) it would have been more like Herod than the son of an ancient Greek god. Although I liked these designs and respect them as being an original viewpoint, I rather felt that they were at variance with the Stravinsky score.

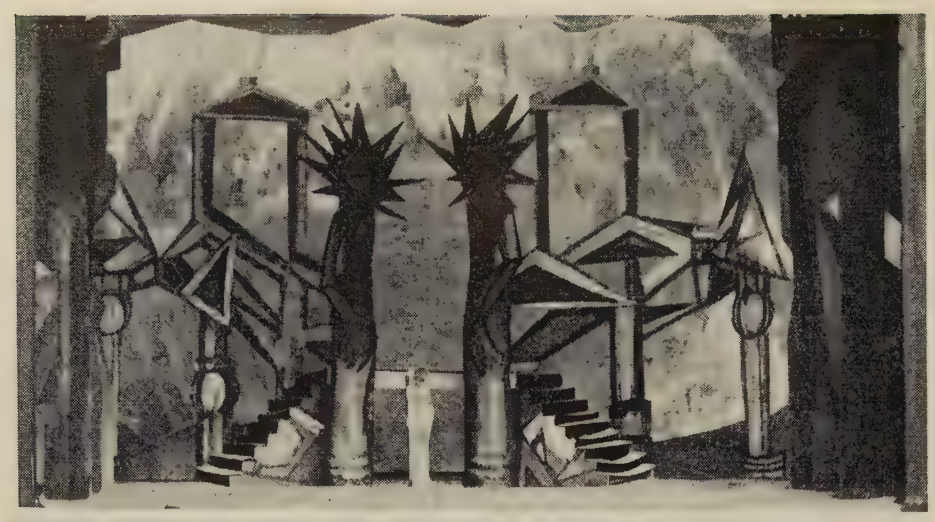
As I said in the previous article, the students were given the record of Stravinsky's *Apollon Musagète* and told to soak themselves in it. This was an essential part of the exercise because I feel that the music largely determines the shape of the designing. For instance, some music is essentially vertical or horizontal, some is curved and some forms a complete circle, some is astringent and some is lush and flamboyant. I don't think it needs a super intelligence to understand how these various types of score affect the approach of the designer. One thing I would never say about a Stravinsky score, apart from certain passages of his early ballet composition *The Firebird,* was that it was lush. I think that Prowse has gone a little astray in seeing the *Apollon* music in a rather flamboyant light, and I think that what he has done is far more suited to a composer like Richard Strauss.

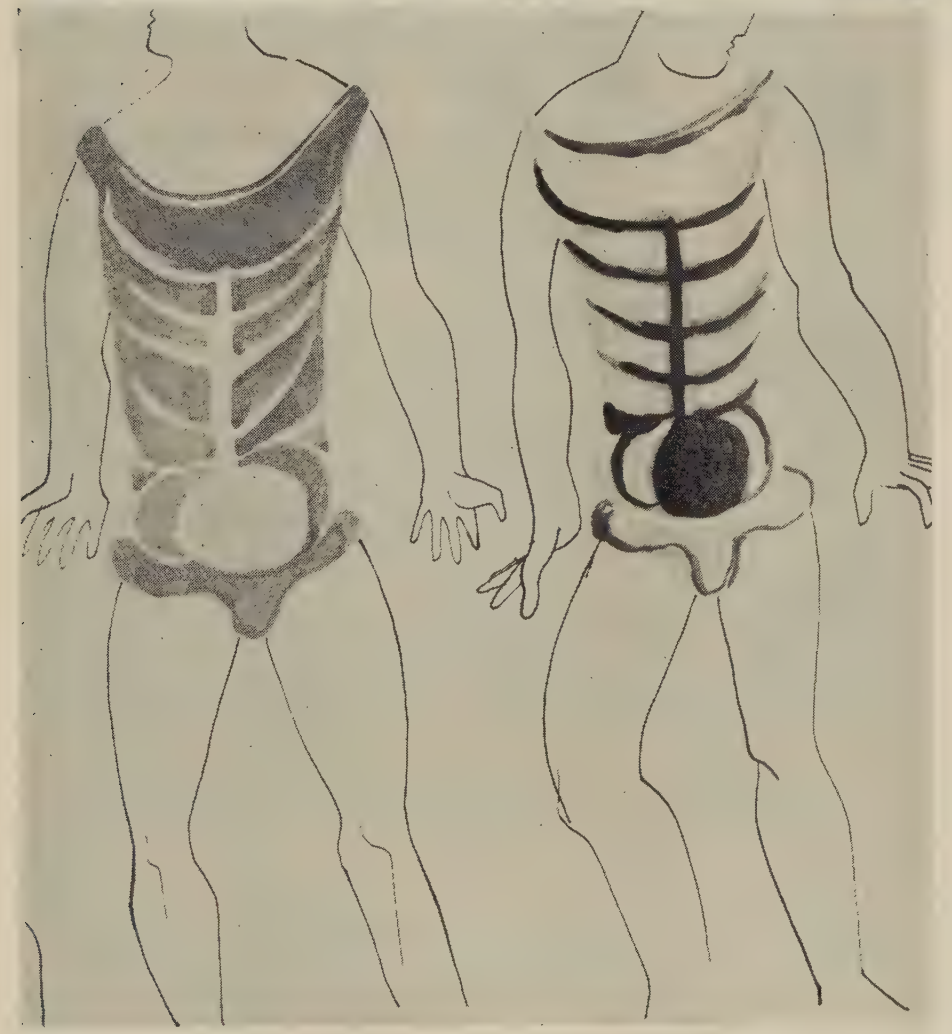
It was a curious and interesting point that most of the students saw the score as vertical. My own feeling is that it is curved, but I think that may be more due to my placing it in the context of Stravinsky's own development. To me it seems more rounded than anything that Stravinsky had written before but I can quite see that if the students had listened to it just after a composer such as, say, Ravel, then *Apollon* might well appear to be vertical.

Here of course I may be quite wrong and the fact that so many of the students saw it in a decidedly vertical light possibly proves that I am. But it opens up a long, mainly undiscovered, vista of thought about the relation of design and light to music and it seems high time that most of us turned back to the fascinating discourses on this subject from that great master and reformer — Adolph Appia. His *Die Musik und die Inscenierung,* published in 1899 and never as far as I know wholly translated into English, is really the Bible of modern stagecraft. His development of the relationship between music, lighting and designing, specially for the Wagner operas, changed the whole attitude towards theatre design. Whereas Gordon Craig brought to the theatre his then much-needed fantasies and eventually completely unrealisable though monumental conceptions, and the first twentieth century Russians such as Bakst and Benois brought their taste and exoticism of form and colour, it was Appia who brought light and new aesthetic principles. Today his name is mainly forgotten, and possibly by many students not even known, but, although most designers are unconscious of the fact, it is still Appia to whom they owe their release from the hidebound traditions and practices of the previous centuries.

I never know how much of the history of stage design development is taught in art schools, but it is as important to the student as it is to those who are working in the theatre professionally. We think that we have made great strides in theatrical

PHILLIP PROWSE'S VISION OF APOLLON : *Above, Prowse's grey blue and white setting. Below, two costume designs for the muses, Terpsichore and Calliope.*
Photos : Robert Middlemiss.





SCULPTOR'S VIEW: A model for the setting and two designs for Apollo by Robin Crozier, whose first attempt at ballet design this was. He has been trained at the Slade School as a sculptor. Photos: Robert Belton and Robert Middlemiss.

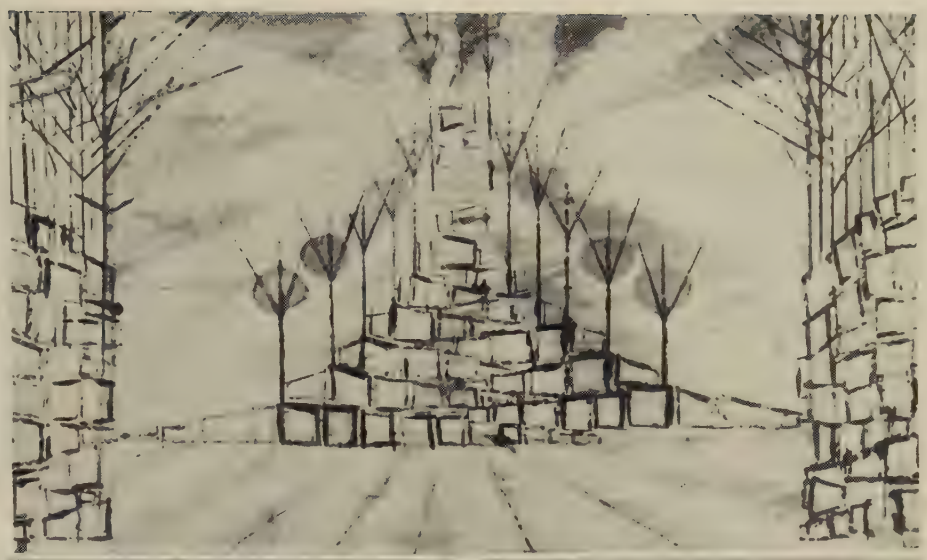
presentation and when it comes to lighting we undoubtedly have. The coming of electric light has obviously thrown a new illumination on the scene, though I remember Ellen Terry writing that no modern lighting could compare with the texture and atmosphere gas lighting brought to the productions at the old Lyceum. However, on one point the theatre of today has made a decided move in a backward direction and that is in the realisation of stage effects. A careful study of the machines used on, for instance, the Renaissance stage, brings this point only too surely home. Up to even the last war, Drury Lane could achieve startling effects which seem impossible today. It is only in old theatres with long-standing traditions like the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen where it seems possible to weave any of the old theatre magic which used to delight our forefathers and ancestors. The present generation of designers has got so used to the grumbles of stage managers who say that elaborate effects are impossible that they have got out of the way of thinking that in actual fact anything *is* possible in the theatre. More is the pity.

After this slight divergence from the main theme of this article we come to the designs of Robin Crozier. whose model and design for Apollo you see on this page. He is primarily a sculptor and this is his principal subject at the Slade. What you see here are his first attempts at designing for the theatre. From a practical point of view and considering the requirements of the ballet, his designs have a number of obvious faults. First and foremost the setting is too heavy in its approach to the subject and also in the dull red which pervades his work. Then his sculptural elements, such as the rostrum, stairway and two central caryatids do not quite tie up with his painted elements such as the architectural profile piece at the back and his wings. The reason for this was that he changed his mind half-way because in the beginning he saw the whole setting as being sculptured. Nevertheless I find his work impressive even if not for this particular subject. He has an original colour sense and a decided understanding of perspective which was emphasised by the design of his stage cloth, unfortunately not visible in the picture of his setting. After an uncertain start in his costume designs he achieved some highly original ideas and, being a sculptor, showed an understanding of anatomy and the range of movement in the human body. I liked the sensitive line of his costume drawings, particularly those for Apollo, which are shown on this page.

On the top of page 17 is a design for the setting by Pamela Howard. Her first attempts were not really what the ballet required, but she later discarded these in favour of the one you see. Here I think she has got a good shape to her setting and one which seems suitable to the ballet's general plan. Her tree-lined rostrum would form an admirable path of ascent for the final apotheosis. The foliage on the trees was of orange transparent material which removes any feeling of heaviness. The tree suggestions at the top of her wings were also cut out and practical, so that here again she achieved a lightness to the whole scene. She too has managed to give a sense of distance by her use of perspective. Originally her design was in black, grey, white and pink, which, to me at any rate, immediately suggested a scene from a revue; later she changed to pink ranging through to dark red, and the result was far more satisfactory. What I saw of her costumes, and they were far from complete, were principally in white, and the general effect was rather too insipid.

The other designs on page 17 — for a muse, Leto, and the setting — are by Carol Burns. After starting off with the idea of presenting the whole ballet as folk art, she changed her mind. She has, as you can see, a definitely vertical idea of the whole thing, and though the upward surge is a move in the right direction, I think that her stage is too enclosed for this particular work, too much of a secret place, and that to a certain extent it would stop the ballet from breathing. Her osseous suggestion on the costumes is an interesting idea and I find the design for Leto rather impressive. The whole scheme is mainly in blue and this would cause a number of complications in the lighting plot as blue is one of the most light-absorbing colours and almost

FEMININE VIEW : Right, the setting as seen by Pamela Howard. Middle, costumes for Leto and a muse, and below that again the setting as Carol Burns sees them. Photos : Robert Middlemiss.



impossible to show in its true tones. Either it has to be lit more or less white, which is terribly hard and unnatural, or it has to be lit blue, which plays havoc with make-up. Having myself once designed a ballet — *Design with Strings* — mainly in blue, I know only too well how much light it is necessary to pour on the stage to get any sort of effect at all. The only solution is to light the setting blue, then illuminate the dancers with a cluster of acting-areas (large overhead lamps) so that the warm light shines only on the stage and does not hit any piece of scenery. Blue is really a snare and a delusion because it looks so good on the palette and on the design that it is impossible to envisage just how difficult it can become in the theatre.

There were a considerable number of other students who attempted to design *Apollon Musagète,* and much of their work was interesting, but they were so far from complete, owing to illness or to time taken up with other jobs, that it would be unfair to assess them in any detail as they could not present anything like a finished plan. I can only say that the standard was remarkably high all round.

As I said in the beginning of last month's article — ballet design cannot be taught and it is only possible to inspire and guide. Both Peter Snow and Nicholas Georgiadis, who is an equal principal and not an assistant as I erroneously stated last month, have decidedly got the right ideas as to how to inspire and guide if this exercise is anything like typical of the usual results they cajole out of their students.

Although these black and white reproductions give little idea of the true qualities of the designing, I think that they show clearly enough the infinite variety of approaches that can be made to the same subject. I think they also show how these two teachers have let each of the students develop in their own natural line of country. It is not easy to deal with students for although they are obviously keen on designing, as presumably they would not do it if they were not, they are also at an age and state of life when there is no particular sense of urgency. The fact that this particular subject did not perhaps appeal to some so that they never finished their work showed a lack of seriousness. There was also a tendency to avoid certain less interesting costumes. It is this kind of attitude which teachers have to combat, and the fact that there were so many who stayed the course says a lot for the ability of Snow and Georgiadis.

The Slade has the best record of any English art school for producing designers. From what I saw I would say that this record could easily be held. Directors, choreographers and impresarios are so often bemoaning the fact that there are no new designers that I feel they could save themselves a deal of trouble by paying a visit to the Stage Design Section of the Slade School, London University, Gower Street, London.

BALANCHINE BALLET IN PARIS: Above. Jean-Paul Andréani leaping in one of the movements of Balanchine's Symphonie *(Gounod). Josette Amiel is on the left. Below. the two principals, Amiel and Andréani, in a* pas de deux *from the same ballet.*

Photos : Lido.

Symphonie

First given at the Paris Opéra on March 4. Music, Gounod's Symphony in D Major. **Décors and Costumes by Bouchène. Choreography by George Balanchine.**

Cast

JOSETTE AMIEL JEAN-PAUL ANDREANI

with *Corps de Ballet*

IF a Balanchine work is always an interesting addition to a large company's repertoire, a better choice than this could doubtless have been made from the choreographer's works. Rather than this pale echo of *Palais de Cristal (Symphony in C),* a revival of the excellent *Serenade,* which was created in 1947, would have been a far better choice.

Balanchine's aim in this case has resulted in a visual translation of the music in a meticulous word-for-word manner. But what led him to select this academic and not over inspiring symphony of Gounod's? Certainly the lack of musical inventiveness accentuates the rather flat architecture of the score — but the choreographer is capable of transposing more elegant works than this. Here the general dryness lays bare the craftsmanship — the reverse of art concealing art. Furthermore, the very geometrical *ports de bras* are lacking in lyricism. The Russian dancers, anyway, have spoiled us in this direction.

Although Balanchine was pressed for time and was working under awkward conditions, the complex design of his *ensembles* comes over clearly. The *corps de ballet,* which actually has the star rôle, has been given an excellent vehicle for displaying its qualities — chiefly virtuosity and elegance. If it can add to these merits a little more discipline and precision, this work of Balanchine's, although too short, will at least have served some purpose. The two soloists only take a secondary rôle in the proceedings. Josette Amiel, whom we know as a graceful dancer, showed that she is acquiring the beginnings of the mastery which she has not up till now achieved. Although more self-effacing, Jean-Paul Andréani once again delighted us with his magnificent elevation.

The rather conventional décors and costumes by Bouchène have hardly any personality. In spite of the success of some of the tutus, the overall colour scheme leaves much to be desired.

Marie-Françoise Christout.

Paris Returns to Seven Dials

The latest company from Paris — Ludmilla Tcherina's Theatre Ballet — comes to London and plays at the Cambridge Theatre which has seen many another French company and which lies a short distance from the Princes Theatre and the Adelphi which have all shown the best of post-war French ballet.

BACKGROUND

IS it only the lingering of some deep-seated instinct of national inferiority that leads us to expect only the latest, best, brightest and indeed a whole thesaurus of adjectival superlatives from the cultural exports of those clever French? Dazzled by Dior, besotted with Balmain, we still lick our fashion-hungry chops at the exotic scents wafting over from the other side of the Chanel. As the impudent voice of the crooner, Jean Sablon, put it so many nostalgic years ago : "Paris, tu n'as pas changé beaucoup". And just as Paris has remained at the pinnacle of high fashion so, being generously unwilling to dismiss the French as a nation of dressmakers, we have come to look to them for the latest and most modish in art. Nor have we been disappointed — in painting, in literature, in films, sometimes in the theatre, even sometimes in music, the French have consistently amused. amazed and refreshed us. Yet in ballet, that hybrid art which they started and which still bears the mark of its parentage in the universal language of its classrooms, the French have, quite simply, not really excelled. Of course, in fairness, this is not a view shared by the French !

THE LOVERS OF TERUEL: *Drawing by the French designer, Jacques Dupont, which gives an impression of the meeting of the two lovers, Isa and Reinaldo, in the ballet produced by Raymond Rouleau and choreographed by Milko Sparemblek.*

But this, you may say — with your loyal Francophile heart thumping with indignation — is unfair. Yes, perhaps it is a little unfair, though possibly not so unfair as your rising blood-pressure would seem to indicate. To adapt Pirandello out of recognition, French ballet could perhaps be summed up as Six Generations of Dancers in search of a Choreographer. The French ballet had its day, rather like the Italian in this, before the rest of the world had got started. The magnificent Romantic ballet was primarily a French show, despite the sometimes pointed interventions of those interfering Scandinavians. It flared up and sizzled out, its last fitful but often splendid splutterings coming during the time of the Ballet of the Second Empire. *Coppélia* in 1870 was its swan-song, the Franco-Prussian War of the same year its death-knell.

The French ballet seemed to creep underground. and however fervently such writers as Stéphane Mallarmé pointed out the potentiality of the dance, little or nothing happened until 1909, and even then it was not a French ballet that conquered Paris but Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. Eventually Diaghilev and Paris joined together to form an artistic alliance, and Paris found itself once more the centre of the ballet world. The Russian Revolution led many Russian teachers to open up shop in the Paris studios, and later the death of Diaghilev bequeathed Serge Lifar to the Paris Opéra, where he was to found a new tradition in a reign that lasted nearly thirty years. The Russian emigré teachers and students fed the Ballets Russes during the years between the wars. and the trickle of fine French dancers, that was later to become a flood, started. But despite the work being put in by Lifar at the Opéra, when the world was submerged by war in 1939 there was still no French ballet of world-ranking status.

After the war the situation appeared to change for the better. Roland Petit, Janine Charrat emerged and started to make use of France's wonderful dancers. But just as French ballet at last seemed — at least to these jaded British eyes — to be getting down to business, a curious thing happened. The choreographers and the directors appeared to decide that ballet pure and simple was not enough, and with one accord set out to make it impure and complicated. The recent tendency in French ballet has been to fuse theatrical dancing into some new synthesis of artistic expression.

This same worthy aim has also been pursued in America in a not entirely dissimilar manner, yet with, I fancy, far more rewarding results. For unlike New York, Paris has for the time being almost turned its back on the formal *danse l'ecole,* and although its ballet-masters appear to have spawned many bastards it has yet to produce a success on the scale of *West Side Story.* (In fairness it must be noted that Charrat herself, for some reason or another, appears to have been somewhat quiescent since her magnificently experimental *Les Algues,* and London has yet to see a representative selection of the works of Béjart and the new Left Bank school of choreography). This then is the background of the Ludmilla Tcherina Theatre which opened a brief season at the Cambridge Theatre on March 19.

The intention was to create a ballet-plus. Ludmilla Tcherina — the artistic director of the enterprise — had taken the step of engaging theatre and film directors to adapt and produce the various ballets, working in liaison with the choreographers. It was also hoped both to broaden the appeal of these works, and to strengthen their expressive power by utilising a certain amount of speech and stereophonic sound effects. (In the event these experiments in staging were really confined to one ballet, *The Lovers of Teruel.)* To help her in the fulfilment of her aims Tcherina enlisted the assistance of such men as Jean Renoir, Raymond Rouleau, Jacques Dupont, Maurice Thiriet and Mikis Theodorakis. The dancers in her company included Milko Sparemblek, Vassili Sulich, and Stevan Grebel. It was stated that nearly £80,000 had been spent on the productions. Now all this makes fairly formidable reading, and I think it would be sensible to resist the temptation of being wise after the flop, and to bear in mind both the conditions that gave birth to the idea of the company and also to ponder a bit on the stature of some of the people involved.

THE BALLETS

HEARTS ARE TRUMPS. Story : Ludmilla Tcherina, adapted by Roger Pierre and Jean Marc Thibault. Direction and Scenery : Jean Marc Thibault. Choreography : Don Lurio. Music : Maurice Thiriet. Costumes : Jean Develay.

THE LOVERS OF TERUEL. Idea : Michael Powell. Adaptation and Direction : Raymond Rouleau. Choreography : Milko Sparemblek. Music : Mikis Theodorakis. Scenery and Costumes : Jacques Dupont.

ISA'S DREAM AND PROFESSION : Two scenes from The Lovers of Teruel. *Left, Isa (Ludmilla Tcherina) gets caught up in the dance of anonymous characters in a dream. Right, Isa appearing in the play given by itinerant players in a street. Photos : Lido.*

THE WOLF AND THE LAMB. Choreography : Edmond Audran. Music : Scarlatti. Décor : Claude Bleynie.

GUNPOWDER FLASH. Story and Direction : Jean Renoir. Choreography : Paul Goubé. Music : Mikis Theodorakis. Scenery and Costumes : Ludmilla Tcherina.

THESE four ballets added up to one of the least rewarding evenings I have ever spent in the theatre, and while the company is of quite considerable interest in its general implications as a sign of the times and perhaps a warning for the future, the intrinsic value of the works shown in London strikes me as so slight that I do not propose to waste a great deal of space in discussing them.

The first ballet was called *Hearts are Trumps*. They may well have been, but the ballet certainly was not. I could not understand the story, which seemed to have few points of contact with the synopsis printed in the programme. It took place in a down-at-heel Paris bistro, and most of the patrons carried around with them large cardboard hearts. One character was intriguingly called "The Awful Jo-Jo" although why she should have been singled out was beyond me, as they all seemed equally awful. The work was directed by Jean Marc Thibault, a producer of musical shows and revues, and the choreography was by Don Lurio — presumably "hot-foot from his success" with *Le Rendez-vous Manqué*. The programme claimed : "There is a reassuring moral to this story : 'Who Wins — Loses'." I trust that the collaborators got what reassurance and comfort they could from this.

The Lovers of Teruel was a horse of a very different colour, yet still failed to finish the course. It was by far the most ambitious ballet in the repertory, and also the one comparatively most successful. At least it had the grace to fail aspiringly. Dupont's setting — discussed in full later — proved an admirable example of cinematic neo-realism, and once or twice Rouleau, a distinguished Paris theatre producer, scored a telling point. The idea, debited to Michael Powell on the programme, proved little more than to place the Pagliacci story outside a railway siding, and throughout the whole ballet those darling dodos, stereophonic trains, chugged happily. You could see them puffing out steam, yet I noted with a sense of privation that I was unable to smell them, which said something of the limitations of Rouleau's ingenuity.

The choreography had been placed at the door of Milko Sparemblek, yet seemingly after some initial confusion, for the programme had originally given Dmitri Parlic as co-choreography, but his name had been inked out. Bully for Parlic! Poor Sparemblek's choreography proved completely unremarkable, it was almost impossible to equate it with the brilliant promise shown by his earlier ballet seen in London, *Quatuor*. However, Sparemblek came out of the ballet with honours fairly even, for he gave a performance as the murderer-husband that would have been compelling in any circumstances and was downright remarkable in these. Tcherina acted, mimed, danced or what-have-you, the rôle of the heroine, and in the course of the proceedings gave what looked suspiciously like an extract from the Mad Scene from *Giselle*, which engendered in me no great desire to see her in the complete ballet. Vassili Sulich, looking and dancing as superbly as ever, was also among those involved.

The Wolf and the Lamb had two qualities that should not be under-estimated. It was short and its story was intelligible even to me. A lamb is playing happily in a meadow. A wolf enters and eats up the lamb. Wolves are like that. There may have been a moral — it was based "after" a fable by La Fontaine — but the programme, normally so helpful, was uncommunicative on this point. Ella Bogval and Luis Diaz danced the late Edmond Audran's choreography every bit as appallingly as it deserved.

The programme ended with *Gunpowder Flash*, a ballet which, in the mood I was in by that time, had a most promising title. Having steeled myself up to the prospect of inevitable extermination in the cause of Ballet (Etonne-moi, Jean! as Diaghilev might have said), Jean Renoir's potty little allegory was about two warring nations, one favouring the pursuit of science and the other the pleasures of love, faced with the problems of co-existence. If the intended moral of this allegory was that we in the West should meet the Russians in the bedchamber rather than the council chamber, it showed a somewhat too fanciful grasp of current events. Yet for all that, the theme might have made an extremely funny film, where its satire could have been pointed in a naturalistic way. It proved death as a ballet, and was not helped by either music, décor or choreography. Tcherina as Leader of the conquering Scientists seduced into acquiescence by a personable Nature Boy, danced rather well in this, and Stevan Grebel, a stalwart dancer new to London, excelled as the Nature Boy in question.

SUMMING UP

IT may be that someone else would have found this company interesting, perhaps someone less indoctrinated than myself with ballet, but somehow I doubt it. I hardly knew whether to laugh at what was offered or to cry at what was spent. Yet two questions stick in my mind. Firstly, what did Paris make of it all? Secondly, and more importantly, what went wrong with these well-intentioned plans?

While this company hardly proved that the outside producer has a part to play in the ballet theatre, did it really prove the negative proposition that he hasn't? I am not at all certain that some ballets and some choreographers might not benefit from the advice of "production consultants" brought in in the same way as today someone might be brought in to do the lighting. Yet the choreographer must surely retain the reins of the production in his own hands, and that I think is where Tcherina and her collaborators made their basic miscalculation. In ballet there is no substitute for good choreography, and never will be.

Then, it is generally accepted that we are short of good ideas for ballet, and let us agree that outsiders could well assist us in this direction. But those ideas simply must be suitable for translation into ballet terms. Few choreographers in their right senses would have attempted the themes for three of the four ballets here presented, and the last was nothing more original than a revamp of the Pagliacci chestnut.

There is also this question of gimmicks. Forgetting all the unfortunate advance publicity about "total theatre" and ballet's "traditional apathy", are we sure that ballet cannot derive something from new

A PLAY BECOMES REALITY: Left, Isa (Tcherina) makes love to Reinaldo (Vassili Sulich), who is stabbed by her jealous husband in life (Milko Sparemblek) during the play's action. Right, Isa, finding that Reinaldo is really stabbed. goes mad. A dramatic moment towards the end of The Lovers of Teruel. *Photos: Lido.*

mechanical techniques? Although I would never say a work is not a ballet merely because someone murmurs "Je t'aime" during the course of it, clearly, recorded speech is a tricky element that needs to be used with more discretion than it was here, and one can very soon have too much of stereophonic train-sets! But how about using films in some ballets, and why not enlist the services of a good old-fashioned conjuror to try his hand at the stage sorcery that is so essential a part of the old classical standbys? A gimmick is not bad in itself, but only when it is used just for its shock or novelty value.

Finally, there is the trend towards realism markedly discernible in *The Lovers of Teruel*. The only truly realistic art form is the cinema, which has something of the relationship to the theatre which a photograph bears to a painting. Any *avant garde* movement in ballet might possibly be well advised to consider the history of painting since the introduction of photography. The conclusions drawn could be helpful. **C. B.**

DECOR

WHEN Boris Kochno and Jean Cocteau interested Diaghilev in the painters of "L'Ecole Française" before the first world war, there was something of an outcry from the old Russian guard. As the years passed the outcry became but an angry whimper because until the day that he died in Venice, Diaghilev never really turned away from the schools of Paris. with their startling if sometime ephemeral brilliance, when any ballet designing had to be done.

Just as the second mondial clash of arms was dying down, it was again Boris Kochno who revitalised the dying embers of taste in stage decoration by engaging the new L'Ecole de Paris for his Ballets des Champs-Elysées. Jean Hugo, Clavé, Malclés, Beaurepaire, Bérard, what a panorama of glorious stage pictures they created!

But just as twenty-five years before, when the academic voice of old Russia was raised in protest, so over the past fourteen post-war years has been heard that cuckoo cry from that ruling new-to-culture class whose artistic appreciation sees no further than the four sides of a convex television screen. They, like many others in ballet's high places who should know better, look on French designers as something entirely frivolous and delight in dismissing everything that comes from France as "chi-chi". Those that don't think could not be expected to know that it is the French creative genius that has shaped the stage designing of two continents; those that do have realised this fact and it is this sense of inferiority that has made them antagonistic. Unfortunately it is the French themselves. with their knowledge of their own superiority and their derision at what is designed outside France, who help to fan the flames of antagonism.

However, regardless of these international attitudes, it has been the French ballet companies that have brought the greatest visual beauty to the post-war scene. Therefore it was with a feeling of excitement and expectation that some of us approached the season given by the newest Paris company and artistically directed by Ludmilla Tcherina. The curtain arose on *Hearts are Trumps* (a music-hall translation of *Atout Coeur)* with costumes by Jean Develay and a décor by Jean Marc Thibault, consisting of a few typical bistro objects, a doorway set in a non-existent back wall and black velvets surrounding all.

First impressions are vitally important and this gave an overwhelming sense of financial and artistic poverty. What a pity that more of the vast fortune, reported to have been lavished on the company, could not have been spent on dressing-up this pitifully insipid little work. At least a gasp of surprise or pleasure at the décor would have been preferable to the utterly negative reaction of the audience. Even the costumes which, had they been designed with taste and wit could have made it all look less impoverished were completely undistinguished and some were executed in that repulsive range of colour I associate with "glow" lettering on advertisements.

Mercifully for the name of French designing the evening was saved, or shall we say made possible, by Jacques Dupont in the ballet which followed. *The Lovers of Teruel* contains every *cliché* known to post-war French ballet but its setting is magnificent. True the environment is the same as in Petit's *Les Forains* and it is also true that for this work Christian Bérard created more atmosphere — of a travelling players' theatre on the sleezy outskirts of a French town — with the aid of a few posts and a few yards of calico than was ever achieved in all the elaboration of this latest work on the same subject. Nevertheless the texture and the suggestion in this grey, smoky setting by Dupont is masterly. It has all the atmosphere of any railway cutting you like to think of between the Gare St. Lazare and the country. The several levels, which show both sides of the track joined by a metal bridge, provide admirable opportunities for drama in the ballet though the choreography and production never made full use of the setting's many possibilities. On a stage the size of the Cambridge Theatre, the bulky caravan, which is moved on and off on the prompt side, doubtless obscured the view of people sitting in this part of the theatre — this must be accounted a rather serious fault.

The only colour came from the railway signal lights, from the proscenium of the little temporary theatre and from some of the costumes. These latter were muted in colour and became integrated in the smoke and soot of the whole environment though the costumes for the players, multi-coloured like millefleur paper-weights, attained a tawdry nobility. The one discordant note was struck by Tcherina's own spotless white costumes and when, for the play, she came on in a dazzling snowy flowing broderie anglais evening coat she looked more as though she was sweeping into the stalls at a smart premiere rather than taking part in itinerant theatricals on a mean sidewalk.

Had all the designing had even a quarter of the talent which Dupont brought to *The Lovers of Teruel* the evening would have been at least visually acceptable even if the productions and choreography were less so but it was followed by a work which it hardly seems possible could ever have found its way on to a stage viewed by an adult audience. Claude Bleynie designed a backcloth for La Fontaine's *The Wolf and the Lamb* fable as the very worst example of the modern French tapestry school. This spiky treatment of nature was only suited to a minute front-cloth scene in a second-rate revue. Not much better was the design-

Continued on page 34

CAMELLIA TRIBUTE : Yvette Chauviré, accompanied by her partner Gert Reinholm, takes camellias to lay at the tomb in the Montmarte Cemetery of the original " Dame au Camellias " — Alphonsine Plessis. Chauviré has recently danced the Lady of the Camellias rôle with enormous success in Germany. Photo : Lido.

FAREWELL TO DANCING : Celia Franca blows out candles on the 8th anniversary cake of the Canadian National Ballet at a reception which followed her farewell performance as a dancer. Photo : Elizabeth Fry.

curtain up!

And now there are four

"SO Madame's got her *third* company," said one of the Royal Ballet dancers in the interval of the Royal Ballet School's triumphantly successful performance of *Coppélia* at Covent Garden. "The *fourth,*" corrected a bystander, "you're forgetting the Opera Ballet." I'm afraid that many of us are apt to forget the Opera Ballet as it is not often in either the news or the limelight. Under Harold Turner's direction, however, they are a capable and well-disciplined group of dancers, and many a promising young artist has made his or her début with them. This season, Sandra Vane has been appointed their new ballet mistress. Formerly with the Theatre Ballet and before that with International Ballet and the Borovansky Ballet, she has a welcome maturity although still young, all combined with a refreshing sense of humour.

But to go back to the school *Coppélia,* I certainly got the impression while watching the evening performance of *The Sleeping Beauty* that the professional dancers were fighting hard to ensure that they made an even better effect than the students had done. This sort of competition is just what is needed. Now we all look forward to the school in *Le Lac des Cygnes* next autumn.

Fans mob Morrice

IT'S no longer news if Tommy Steele or Johnnie Ray get mobbed by fans, but when such a thing happens to a dancer then that is worth trumpeting about. When Ballet Rambert recently gave *Two Brothers* in Hull, Norman Morrice, the ballet's principal dancer and choreographer, was literally besieged by 200 hysterical teenagers. They found his beat "James Dean" rôle much to their taste and refused to budge from the stage door until they'd met him. When he finally appeared, they rushed at him, losing shoes, laddering stockings and trampling each other in the general stampede. A few accepted autographs with relish, but the majority expected something more. Although he had to be rescued by force and repairs were later carried out by the wardrobe staff, he did try to look as if he enjoyed his reception.

Rambert at the Wells

BECAUSE it is due to leave for America to appear at Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival in July, Ballet Rambert's summer season at Sadler's Wells begins much earlier than is usual. Rambert can usually be relied upon to spring a surprise or two in her London seasons and this one seems full of promise. I said last month Paula Hinton will appear as guest artist in her husband Walter Gore's *The Night and Silence,* but as we go to press this has been denied. However, there are to be two revivals — Jack Carter's *Past Recalled* and Frank Staff's *Czernyana.* The latter has not been danced for many years and Elizabeth Schooling is supervising the revival, which will also restore some dances which have not been given since the war. The world première, which is usual during these seasons, is a new creation by Norman Morrice to music by the American composer — Surinac.

This pre-American season will be led by Beryl Goldwyn, Lucette Aldous, Gillian Martlew, Elsa Recagno, John Chesworth and Kenneth Bannerman, but Rambert is expecting some newcomers to attract a good deal of attention. Two of these — Irene Siegfried and Christopher Lyall — are survivors of the Edinburgh Festival Ballet, while Anna Truscott has been dancing in Yugoslavia.

Boos out of place

WHEN the regular Covent Garden orchestra was away on tour with the opera during the Royal Ballet's last summer season, many people got rightly annoyed at the indifferent playing (to put it mildly) that disgraced many performances. There was such a rumpus at the time that you would have thought that something might have been done about ensuring that such a situation did not occur again. But, no! The Spring tour of the opera company has left the ballet with just as indifferent a band as before. But though this is a deplorable state of affairs, it will not be put right, as some boorish people seem to believe, by vicious and indiscriminate booing — especially when the booing is organised, as happened recently, for a night when the conductor had managed to secure a reasonable performance. Such idiotic behaviour frustrates all serious attempts to ensure better performances in the orchestra pit and proves, what most of us knew already, that many people don't really listen to the music.

Water with the vodka

IT could only be a Russian organisation that, at its annual party, served up Russian peasant dances performed by an English ballerina. This happened when the Pushkin Club threw a party for members and friends in the ex-premises of the Royal Ballet School in Colet Gardens. It is possible that this ballerina, Anya Linden, will be the last person to give professional dancing within these historic walls. Now the new building, opened by Princess Margaret in April, is finished next door the Baylis Room. scene of these Anglo-Russian junketings, will no longer be the place in which young students undergo their first interviews for admittance to Dame Ninette de Valois' establishment.

But on this particular evening, March 14, whether you understood Russian or not, it

was impossible not to be fascinated by the sight and sound of 200-odd Russians happily wallowing in reminiscence, music, singing, soft drinks and what appeared to be home-made vodka. The vodka was good too, even though some spoilsport had gone around re-christening it with a jug of water.

There was some passionate singing of those throbbing, nostalgic peasant melodies of which every line contains a laugh and a tear; there was concertina music and violin solos by Igor Tamarin, Anya Linden's husband. Linden had been coached by Marie Rambert, who had taught her a special version of a peasant dance to music from *The Snow Maiden*, and, piling on authenticity, had lent her a real, red-embroidered peasant linen dress in which to perform. Linden also danced other solos and was seen in dance-duets with Nico Chavchavadze, who, though not a professional, proved an accomplished enough partner for these energetic leapings and cavortings. Giving parties is only one of the very many activities of the lively and energetic Pushkin Club, which has done more to bring an understanding of Russian culture to London than has any other organisation.

Ashton on the move

MANY readers will have seen the protests made in some newspapers about the proposal to pull down Yeoman's Row, off Brompton Road. This little "village street" of Georgian houses has many associations with ballet. For many years Oliver Messel had his studio there, and it was here that he designed most of his early ballets; then Mrs. Kelly, who made so many costumes for ballet companies, lived and died there. For the past nine years the street has been notable as being the one in which Frederick Ashton lived. When you think of what a gentle and placid little backwater it has become it is curious to think that a hundred years ago it was a very unsavoury place known popularly as "Blood and Guts Street". Nothing could be more unsuitably named for a place where Ashton has been able to make camellias flower in his back-yard.

Now, Ashton can be found surrounded by mountains of papers in an attempt at sorting things out before being moved to another small house deeper in the heart of Chelsea.

Fifty years of design

AMERICA can be guaranteed to do things in a big way, and now I hear that the John Herron Art Museum in Indianapolis has assembled the largest exhibition of ballet designs ever assembled anywhere. Every designer of any note in the past 50 years is well represented. The museum has been lucky in getting the services of Joan Todd, who has slaved night and day for several months in her successful attempt at collecting the contributions from Europe. These include many examples of all the designers who worked for Diaghilev, all the French designers of recent years, in addition to many British designs. Almost hot off the brush, as it were, are the costume designs by André Levasseur for Frederick Ashton's *La Valse*; they were snatched from the dressmakers' tables the day after the ballet's first performance at Covent Garden and expressed to Indianapolis so as to get there by March 22 when the exhibition was opened by Vera Zorina.

The presentation of these designs was unusual in that they were displayed against a background of photo-murals showing the ballets as they were realised on the stage.

After a month in Indianapolis the exhibition moved to the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut, and then on to San Francisco. In September the American Federation of Arts in New York will show the exhibition for a year.

First light of London Morning

SOME months ago I told you about the ballet which Noël Coward has written and composed for London's Festival Ballet. Now the whole thing is starting to take shape. The choreography is by Jack Carter who was responsible for *The Witch Boy* and the designing is in the hands of William Constable, an Australian designer who created a large number of works in his native country. Just before Easter, Festival Ballet's two artistic directors — Anton Dolin and John Gilpin — visted Noël Coward in Jamaica on their way back from television appearances in New York. They went to make the final arrangements before *London Morning* goes into rehearsal during the company's five-week season in Barcelona. Coward has specially asked that his ballet, which concerns typical daily incidents in front of Buckingham Palace, shall have its first performance in the city which gives it its name.

Sad days for Dolin

"NINA'S death was the last tragedy on top of many beastly things that have happened lately," Dolin was quoted as saying just before he recently left for America. Life has certainly been unkind to him of late — first of all he contracted jaundice and was very ill with that uncomfortable complaint, then his flat in Curzon Lodge was burgled and many valuable and sentimental items were stolen, then Nina died. Nina was Mrs. George Washington Stevens, to whom it was once reported that Dolin would be married. She adored ballet and it was ballet that brought them together. Although she was 84 when she died she was, up to the last eighteen months, as active as someone half her age and there was nothing she loved more than to go to the ballet either in Monte Carlo, where she lived, or in Paris or London, and then give supper parties for the dancers after. She and her first husband were responsible for the inauguration of that remarkable museum in Toledo, Ohio.

happy birthday to...

		May
Leon Ward	London's Festival Ballet	28
Pamela May	Royal Ballet I	30
Nadine Revene	American Ballet Theatre	30
Geoffrey Webb	In *The World of Paul Slickey*	31
		June
Rosemary Lindsay	Royal Ballet I	2
Mary Duchesne	London's Festival Ballet	2
Molly Lake	Teaching in Turkey	3
Carlos Carvajal	De Cuevas International Ballet	3
Natalie Krassovska	London's Festival Ballet	3
Nina Vyroubova	De Cuevas International Ballet	4
Robert Harrold	Teaching	4
Gillian Martlew	Ballet Rambert	5
Petrus Bosman	Royal Ballet I	5
June Sandbrook	Ballet Rambert	5
Arlette Castanier	De Cuevas International Ballet	6
Derek Rencher	Royal Ballet I	6
Ninette de Valois	Royal Ballet Organisation	6
George Zoritch	Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo	6
Sandra Vane	Covent Garden Opera Ballet	6
Max Natiez	London's Festival Ballet	7
Gloria Bonnell	Canadian National Ballet	7
Patricia Ashworth	In *The World of Paul Slickey*	8
Deirdre O'Connaire	London's Festival Ballet	9
Nansi Clement	American Ballet Theatre	10
Keith Beckett	London's Festival Ballet	11
Beryl Grey		11
Marlene Rizzo	De Cuevas International Ballet	12
Christine du Boulay	Teaching in Chicago	12
Sheila Wright	London's Festival Ballet	12
Joan Potter	London's Festival Ballet	12
Jeannette Minty	London's Festival Ballet	13
Sharon Enoch	American Ballet Theatre	14
Frank Staff	In South Africa	15
Scott Douglas	American Ballet Theatre	16
Desmond Doyle	Royal Ballet I	16
Toni Lander	London's Festival Ballet	19
Michael Hogan	London's Festival Ballet	19
Sonia Arova		20
Thelma Litster	Ballet Rambert	22

Dancer You Will Know

WILLIAM WILSON

BORN in Edinburgh in 1934. Started to dance at Marjorie Middleton's school in 1949. Joined Royal Ballet School in May, 1952, and was called up in October of the same year. Did his National Service with the Royal Scots, and with them danced in the Edinburgh Tattoo in 1953. On release in 1954, he had private lessons with Idzikowski and joined the Covent Garden Opera Ballet, where he stayed two years, dancing among other rôles the principal dancer in Carmen. *Joined the Royal Ballet in July, 1956.*

Creations: Huntsman in Ondine. *Rôles: Leading Ivan in* Sleeping Beauty; *Leading Czardas in* Swan Lake; *Leading Character Dancer in* Coppélia; *Drunk and Stable Boy in* Petrushka; *Butcher and Savage in* Mam'zelle Angot; *Sailor in* Tritsch-Tratsch.

WHEN we think of the Russians, the Spaniards and even the Americans it is perhaps not unnatural for us to feel envy ballet-wise at their possession of a national dance idiom and tradition. In Britain the only vigorous and alive tradition of folk dance is to be found in Scotland, and it is possibly no coincidence that William Wilson, the most promising character dancer in the Royal Ballet made his dancing début bekilted and besporraned with the Scots Guards at an Edinburgh Tattoo. Just over two years later he attracted our notice dancing at one of the performances given by the Sadler's Wells Choreographic Group. In a ballet by Wish Mary Hunt about coffee-bar society he made a startling solo début that instantly marked him out as a dancer to watch.

After joining the Royal Ballet he very soon made his presence felt. He was first noticeable among the peasants in *Swan Lake*, and when *Petrushka* was revived in 1957 he had a great success as the concertina-playing drunk. He has a more than useful *demi-caractère* technique — one day he should make an interesting Blue Skater — and he has already made his first tentative mark on the leading character rôles of the classical repertory.

For the Old with Memories, for the Young without NEW BOOKS

When Ballroom Dancing Became Ballet

CASTLES IN THE AIR, by Irene Castle (Doubleday & Co., Inc., New York. $4.50).

BEFORE World War I, Vernon and Irene Castle changed the ballroom dancing habits of America. In their own specific field their contributions were as revolutionary as were those of Isadora Duncan and Ruth St. Denis in the fields of concert dance. Up to their time, ballroom dancing as we know it today was considered neither socially acceptable nor quite decent. However, after their initial success in Paris in 1912 (this was the same era in which both Isadora Duncan and Ruth St. Denis made their greatest and initial successes also in Europe) they returned to America to perform and teach. Dancing in Broadway musicals, teaching ballroom dancing at Castle House and making a film, *The Whirl of Life*, this young American girl and her British-born husband completely changed the direction of ballroom dancing. What's more, Irene Castle, like Isadora Duncan, also changed the fashion of clothes.

Today, the Castles are a living legend, and this autobiography tells this story and explains the innovations that we accept as a matter of fact today. It also makes quite clear that the film. *The Story of Vernon and Irene Castle*, was only a Hollywood version of the true story. In latter sections of this book, one might think that the author was writing "A Thousand Names and Where to Drop Them". Nevertheless, she has presented a first-hand and personal view of a turning point in the social history of American dance. For this reason. her book is of immense value as a true history of the pre-eminent team that set Americans dancing in ballrooms across the United States. **Arthur Todd.**

Learning on the Floor

TEACH YOUR CHILD BALLET, by Gerald Severn (Heinemann, 6*s*.).

FOR some years now Boris Kniaseff's system has aroused curiosity, scepticism and controversy. It is well-known that he has abandoned the traditional academic *barre*, replacing it with a "*barre parterre*" in which all exercises are performed lying (or sitting) on the floor. Kniaseff himself says that the method prepares the body and muscles much more quickly and efficiently and gives much more perfect balance than exercises at the *barre*. This work by Gerald Severn is the first to explore the new system in book form.

It cannot be recommended unreservedly, and one can only assume that it is the sketchiest introduction to the system imaginable. The great majority of exercises given are so simple that it seems they could be done with equal results sitting on a chair. The author claims that the system corrects obesity, rickets, round shoulders, spinal curvature, crooked legs, flat feet, and so on. He, furthermore, claims that any mother can easily supervise the exercises of her child and thus prepare her for ballet lessons.

A number of famous dancers who are ex-pupils give testimonials as to Kniaseff's brilliance as a teacher — but it is not made clear that they have actually studied this system. There are some misspellings and the illustrations are not always clear. A caption reads "without moving the feet". However, reference to the preceding illustration shows that the feet have in fact moved. Most of the children who have posed for the illustrations (attributed to Baron) have ugly raised shoulders and do not encourage one to think highly of the system as Mr. Severn has presented it.

There is a glossary which contains such explanations as "*Battement:* raising (kicking) up of the leg without". Without what? Messrs. Heinemann are to be congratulated for their pluck in trying to get away with it. **E. C. M.**

The Nut that Festival Ballet Cracked

THE NUTCRACKER BALLET, by Pigeon Crowle and Mike Davis (Faber and Faber, 21*s*.).

THE NUTCRACKER BALLET is a handsome souvenir of the Festival Ballet revival, together with an exhaustive history of the original production and its various revivals. Pigeon Crowle is a critic of somewhat excessive geniality; but as David Lichine's Preface shows, this is a quality that is at least endearing to dancers and choreographers.

The main interest of the book lies in its account of the creation and recreation of a classical ballet. There is a fascinating picture of Tchaikovsky reluctantly providing music to measure ("Soft music. 64 Bars . . . Sparkling music. 8 Bars . . . Animated and joyous music. 28 Bars") to the libretto of autocratic old Petipa ("I wrote this. It is good"). And then Festival Ballet's re-creation, choreographed by Lichine, under the direction of Alexander Benois, who had seen the original production, with considerable dissatisfaction, sixty-five years before. Benois, who contributes a characteristic and delightful Introduction, is glimpsed all too briefly, in the stalls at dress rehearsal, noting through his binoculars the one minute detail which is wrong, and supervising its immediate correction.

Mike Davis's photographs are pleasantly varied, though it is a pity that the *ensemble* pictures had to be reproduced so small. They are supplemented by reproductions of half a dozen of Benois' designs for the new production — sketches of a verve and youth and gaiety almost miraculous for a man nearing his ninetieth year.

The Swan for the Children

THE SWAN — THE STORY OF ANNA PAVLOVA, by Helen May. Illustrated by Peggy Fortnum (Nelson, 10*s*. 6*d*.).

THIS is one of a series of "Picture Biographies" for children. Of course it is impossible to discuss children's tastes with any certainty, but one's own memories suggest that they might prefer something more concrete, by way of biography, than this rather wispy impression of the great ballerina. The same goes for Peggy Fortnum's illustrations. Many seem to be based on photographs, and it is a fair bet that young readers would have preferred the original photographs, properly captioned, to these (admittedly charming) sketches vaguely scattered, without explanation, throughout the text. It seems a further error to devote so much of the book to the death and funereal memory of Pavlova. If children enjoy this sort of bitter-sweet graveyard melancholy, they ought not to be encouraged.

Still, if we must have this kind of impression, it comes best from someone like Helen May, who was (along with June, of all people) one of Pavlova's first English pupils. Despite her coy way of referring to herself in the third person, her recollections are often quite illuminating about Madame's extraordinary dedication. They are, however, most likely to appeal to the more sophisticated reader, who will also better appreciate the distinct period flavour of the writing, linking it firmly with the era of *The Fairy Doll, Christmas* and *La Rose Qui Meurt*. **David Robinson.**

CORRECTION

In the advert for Seven Arts Centre on back cover this month, prices of books do NOT include postage. Up to 10/- add 1/-; up to 20/- add 1/6; up to 40/- add 2/-; over £2 post free.

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Variable Ansermet

Tchaikovsky: *The Nutcracker.* Suisse Romande Orchestra (Ernest Ansermet). Decca Stereo SXL 2092-3; Mono LXT 5493-4. 12 in. 76*s.* 3*d.*

HERE at last is a challenge to Antal Dorati's celebrated Mercury recording of *The Nutcracker,* first issued in this country just over four years ago, and which influenced Festival Ballet's admirable decision to mount their Lichine-Benois production of the ballet using Tchaikovsky's uncut score.

The Mercury recording was outstandingly brilliant for its time, and still sounds impressive until we compare it with this new Decca (and especially the stereo version), which in its greater sumptuousness, clarity and depth, reflects the considerable advance that has since been made in recording technique.

As a performance, however, the Mercury is preferable on almost every count. For virtuosity, Dorati's Minneapolis Symphony runs rings round the Suisse Romande, whose lack-lustre and often imprecise playing here falls well below this fine orchestra's usual high standard.

As far as I know, Ansermet has never conducted a full-length performance of this ballet in the theatre, and it can be no mere coincidence that — apart from a tame *Trepak* — his treatment of the items contained in the well-known Suite is so much more rhythmically alert and assured than is generally the case with the rest of the performance.

Tempi on the whole are well judged, though there is a tendency for certain of the dances to drag. The laboured account of the *Entrée* section of the *Pas de Deux,* for instance, would certainly not do for Ivanov's familiar choreography. Dorati's livelier speed at this point would cause dancers no such qualms, and corresponds exactly with Tchaikovsky's own metronome marking. The same scrupulous fidelity distinguishes Dorati's reading throughout.

For the second time since it first appeared, the Mercury set has been withdrawn from the catalogue, but it will probably soon be re-issued through EMI. For those who cannot wait or value quality of reproduction above that of performance, the Decca can be recommended, for it is certainly enjoyable and, apart from a pointless 8-bar cut in *The Arrival in the Kingdom of Sweets* (No. 10), absolutely complete.

Did you know, by the way, that Tchaikovsky originally intended to include, just before the *Trepak,* an *English Dance*? His piano draft of this number, a delightful gigue, is published in the new Russian edition of the ballet, as an appendix. It is not of course played in either of the two recordings.

Tchaikovsky Abbreviated

Tchaikovsky: *Swan Lake* — excerpts. Suisse Romande Orchestra (Ernest Ansermet). Decca Stereo SXL 2107-8; Mono LXT 5501-2. 12 in. 76*s.* 3*d.*

AS with Decca's companion set of *The Nutcracker,* this heavily-abbreviated *Swan Lake* shows the Suisse Romande much below their best form — or to put it more kindly, it may be that they were putting up quite a splendid showing after insufficient rehearsal.

The fastidious Ansermet seems even more out of his element in this highly romantic score than in the more purely diverting *Nutcracker.* He is at his best in what could well be termed the Scherzo "movement" of this most symphonic of full-length ballets — the third act. Here, even if one misses the rhythmic resilience and panache of Dorati or Faier, the national dances certainly have plenty of the right hectic vigour.

SLEEVE DESIGN for Decca's new recording of Swan Lake *has this Roger Wood photograph, reproduced in colour, of a scene from the Royal Ballet II production, with Svetlana Beriosova as Odette, Peter Wright as Benno and Michael Hogan as Siegfried.*

The tender lyricism of the lakeside second act, however, finds Ansermet in a strangely matter-of-fact and unresponsive mood — the jog-trot, routine account of the *Pas de Deux* must surely be one of the least magical ever committed to disc.

Yet it is only fair to point out that both this and the *Nutcracker* set have been greeted with rapture by some critics, though possibly the truly marvellous quality of the

NEW RECORDS
Reviewed by DAVID HUNT

recording has been partly responsible for such unqualified enthusiasm.

Any detailed comparison with Dorati's three-disc complete Mercury version is hardly called for, if only because the Decca leaves out so much. In order and content the selection more or less corresponds with the cut-down Drigo edition still in general theatrical use, and there is of course much to be said for recording just these better-known stretches of the score.

There are, nevertheless, some surprising omissions, strangest of which are the Finale to Act 2 and the Dance of the Cygnets at the start of Act 4. For a souvenir of *Swan Lake* as it is danced by practically every major company in the world apart from the Stanislavsky, Decca's earlier Fistoulari recording (LXT 2681-2) is probably a better buy, because of its more comprehensive selection — it includes, among other things, the Drigo-orchestrated interpolations in Act 4, which Ansermet omits — and for Fistoulari's more sensitive realisation of the score's poetical qualities.

French Ballet Music

Dukas: *La Péri.* Debussy: *Jeux.* Debussy orch. Ravel: *Danse (Tarantelle Styrienne).* Suisse Romande Orchestra (Ernest Ansermet). Decca Stereo SXL 2027; Mono LXT 5454. 12 in. 38*s.* 1½*d.*

THOUGH he may disappoint in Tchaikovsky, Ansermet is of course unrivalled as an interpreter of the French Impressionist school, and these performances have all the exquisite refinement of texture and subtlety of nuance that was to be expected.

Ansermet's earlier recordings of the two main works were fine enough, but from a ballet collector's point of view were less suitable coupled — *Jeux* previously sharing a disc with Debussy's *Six Epigraphes Antiques,* and *La Péri* being backed by Rachmaninov's *The Isle of the Dead.*

As well as providing as a fill-up the irresistible little Debussy-Ravel *Danse,* the new disc includes the imposing fanfare which Dukas added to *La Péri* nine years after its first performance on the occasion of Leo Staats' 1921 Paris Opéra production.

Ansermet omitted the fanfare from his earlier recording and it is not played in Ashton's production of the ballet, which has always seemed to me to be a pity, for although the fanfare is more blatantly theatrical in character than the rest of the music, so arresting a prelude would surely command greater attention than the present opening.

Decca's new recording is superb and in the case of *Jeux* brings out a wealth of detail that tended to be obscured on the 1954 disc. When listening to this fascinating last orchestral work of Debussy, it is best to forget all about the trivial scenario of the Nijinsky ballet, based on the flirtatious antics of three tennis players, which was retained for the later productions of Jean Borlin and Jerome Robbins.

Oddly enough, however, the extraordinarily lifelike manner in which the stereo version reproduces the orchestral interplay makes it possible to take an almost visual interest in the passing of the wisps of theme from one instrument to another, in much the same way as one "watches" the famous game of table tennis on one of the first stereo demonstration discs.

Perhaps it has taken stereo to uncover the full subtlety and wit of Debussy's orchestration, for — as far as I know — this aspect of the score has not been commented on before.

DANSES CONCERTANTES

Continued from page 13

ballet has been lit for years at Covent Garden. Nor did the shock come from the colours of the costumes, whose cerulean blue, burnt sienna, lemon and mustard were as glowing as I can ever remember them being.

No, the overwhelming shock came in the shape of the girls' costumes, which had been transformed most horribly into conventional powder-puff tutus. Don't get me wrong — I have nothing against conventional tutus in the right place, but their place is certainly not in this work and against this setting. Originally these costumes were short tunics of elaborate simplicity and were absolutely right for both the setting and the choreography. Their only fault being an excess of detail; a fault which could have been easily rectified because their silhouette was clean and true to the rest of the designing. The present tutus are not only untrue to the rest of the designing but they also appear to obscure and blunt much of the choreography. It is as though somebody has poured lumps of saccharine into an essentially astringent drink — sugar in Campari, ugh!

A minor shock came with the male headpieces. These were always the most unsatisfactory element of the designing as they were far too chi-chi. But the original miniature glittering pyramids were preferable to the present towering diadems which give all the boys the air of surprised dowagers. This is a pity because the girls' wingéd headdresses are just right and if the boys had nothing on their heads other than the urchin-cut black wigs they would have fitted properly into the picture.

These disastrous "improvements" are thrown into greater relief by the genuine improvements in the rest of the costumes and they, like the setting, have been relieved of some of the original extraneous detail. The only really major change being in the design on Trecu's all-over tights. Instead of the horizontal decoration which was on the costume when originally worn by Donald Britton, the figure is now entwined with traffic-signal arrows in a not wholly successful attempt at giving the costume some of the movement of the choreography.

The ballet still looks lovely on the whole, but the major shock that I received makes me wonder whether the designing lion has been forced to lie down with the sheep of bourgeois design appreciation. If this is the case it has dashed all my fervent hopes that British ballet design was emerging from the sugar and water that has cloyed for so long.

Peter Williams.

PERFORMANCE DETAILS

Running Time

26 minutes.

Audience Reaction

13 calls on 1st night, including 2 with house lights up. General cheering throughout the house.

Press Reaction

6 stars — rave; 5 stars — enthusiastic; 4 stars — favourable; 3 stars — lukewarm; 2 stars — unfavourable; 1 star — pan.

Daily Express *****; *Daily Mail* ****; *Daily Telegraph* *****; *Financial Times* *****; *Manchester Guardian* *****; *News Chronicle* *****; *Observer* ******; *Sunday Times* ******; *The Times* ****.

Dance and Dancers . . . AT HOME

THE ROYAL BALLET
at Covent Garden
The Gala that was

"HOW is it possible to have a gala without Fonteyn, Somes and Grant, who are on their way to New Zealand, and without Shaw, who is still off owing to a foot operation?", that is what people were saying around the place before the Royal Ballet's Benevolent Fund Gala on March 10. By the end of the evening most people had forgotten that these stars were not present. Of course ballet's faithful star fans, The Queen Mother and Princess Margaret, were on hand to add lustre to the occasion, but even they could not have pulled the evening through had it not been for the dancing of the company as a whole. Apart from them, the star attraction of the evening was the English première of Ashton's version of Ravel's *La Valse,* reviewed in full elsewhere, which proved to be the perfect creation for a gala.

It is not easy to find good starters for a gala — *Les Sylphides* and acts of *Coppélia* have been done to death — and the last act of Cranko's *The Prince of the Pagodas* is so separate from the rest of the ballet that its *divertissement* nature has a decided sense of "occasion", or would have were its American Christmas card-like décor not so scrappy. However, Britten's music is stimulating, even if Cranko's choreography hardly parallels it in this quality, and there are quite a lot of things for people to dance. Pirmin Trecu, as the Fool, started the dancing ball rolling and it continued to roll in quite a giddy manner almost to the evening's close. In fact Trecu gave as good a performance in this major-minor rôle as I have ever seen him give. Then on came radiance in the form of Svetlana Beriosova and David Blair as La Belle Rose and the character from whom the ballet takes its title. As the culminating point in a full-length ballet what these two have to do is rather muted compared with similar moments in most full-length works, but their *pas de deux's* shortcomings seem less noticeable when the act is divorced from the rest of the ballet. Their dance is little more than a grand *entrée* with garnishings so that for the beginning of an evening it does not come amiss. Both of them danced with a regal magnificence which offset the rather pedestrian performance of the *pas de six* which preceded them though most of the blame for this can be laid on the desks of the orchestra which seemed determined to rob the music of any sense of occasion.

Not even that band could go far wrong on the good old rum-tum-tum of Strauss's *Tritsch-Tratsch* which opened the divertissements in the last part of the programme after *La Valse.* This jolly flirtation for a girl and two sailors — danced here by Doreen Wells, Peter Clegg and William Wilson — was one of Cranko's first popular successes in the good old days with the Theatre Ballet up at Sadler's Wells. It was created for Elaine Fifield, and like so many rôles created for her, has never been danced by anyone else with similar piquancy. However there was nothing much lacking in the verve with which it was given by these three senior company soloists. It started off this series of little numbers, which found themselves not too alien in Sophie Fedorovitch's first act *La Traviata* setting, on a boisterous note. Incidentally this same setting is to be used again for Ashton's *Les Rendezvous* when it is revived in the near future.

Next we had Anya Linden in the Pizzicato Polka variation for the last act of the Delibes/Ashton *Sylvia.* I suppose that Fonteyn has spoilt us for anyone else in this solo because though Linden danced the steps correctly they lacked the special sharp pointing which anything to "pizzicato" measure demands. The first of three *pas de deux* was given by Beriosova and Ashbridge in the love passage from the second act of *Cinderella.* It is one of Ashton's loveliest dances for two people and both artists did it justice. It was Beriosova's dancing. together with that of two others about whom I shall speak in a minute, that gave the evening its cachet, but I do wish that her hair-dressing could be modified to soften that very hard unbecoming line.

The *pas de trois,* with its accompanying "Mandolin" sung by Elizabeth Robinson, from Howard's *La Fête Etrange* was a rather "étrange" inclusion in this salad. Taken out of its context the rarified atmosphere, which it creates in the ballet itself, is destroyed. Presumably it was given to show off the elegance of the Royal Ballet's newest potential star — Graham Usher. It was certainly given with style by him and Georgina Parkinson and Shirley Graham but somehow it was out of place in the general surroundings. Completely "in place" was the *Don Quixote pas de deux* in which Nadia Nerina and David Blair repeated their triumphant performance given a few weeks previously, and reviewed then, at the Albert Hall. There is nothing to add to the remarks I have already made about it except that it remains as dazzling a firework display as you are likely to see on the home side of Dover's white cliffs — and that includes anything the Crystal Palace might care to show on Guy Fawkes night. These were the other two who made the evening what it was, even if Nerina's tutu looked a little puny.

After this, the Czardas from *Coppélia* Act I (led by Julia Farron and Gary Burne) and Aurora *Pas de Deux* from *The Sleeping Beauty* Act 3 (danced by Beryl Grey and Caj Selling) came as an anticlimax. Grey did not seem too certain of her partner who was wearing an unbecoming wig and his variation, different to the one which Ashton created for our production, was lacking in distinction. A rather *piano* ending to an evening which had in many other respects been the most suitable that the Royal Ballet has yet devised for these annual sprees. As a postscript — I still think the Royal Ballet have yet to find the secret of *divertissement* making. The juxtaposition of the various items and the gradual build-up are as important as in programme making.

P. W.

Forward into tomorrow

TO most people the Royal Ballet School means two establishments — one in darker Baron's Court and the other in the middle of Richmond Park — from which various young people emerge from time to time to swell the ranks of the Bow Street company, the ex-Rosebery Avenue company or to disperse into other companies across the globe. If it seems to us that some never emerge at all it is because we never knew

that they were there anyway. However, after the matinée performance of *Coppélia* on March 21 we do know that at least 90 of them exist and what is more they can give a performance that made their professional brothers and sisters sit up and wonder just how professional they were themselves.

Although I looked forward to this first public exhibition of the Royal Ballet School I must confess that I didn't know quite what to expect — charming children toddling around and looking at the next person to see if the right foot was forward I think. Nobody could have prepared me for the polish of established veterans who appeared to be so mature that after a few moments the "school" aspect of the whole performance was forgotten entirely by me, as it must also have been by the rest of the audience.

I cannot agree with the attitude of some people that it was cheating to use two ex-students — Antoinette Sibley and Graham Usher — in the Swanilda and Franz rôles. It would have been absurd to force students into such exhausting rôles and to give these two white hopes of the Royal Ballet a chance to see what they make of full-length ballets was as important a part of the operation as it was for giving impetus to the present students.

Sibley makes an enchanting Swanilda who brings to the part, as indeed she has to other parts, a feeling of the joy of life and of dancing. From her first entrance she was gay and high-spirited and these qualities were natural and completely unforced; she lived the rôle and reacted instinctively to all the situations even when she was not the centre of attraction. I liked all her bits of by-play with the other villagers and her friends and I also liked the fact that she never made an entrance or exit without there being some reason for these moves. Her dancing throughout was near faultless for a first performance and she could hold her own with any ballerina in her "Spanish" and "Scottish" dance of the second act and also in the *pas de deux* and variations from the last. As well as having a beautiful and natural line, which at times made me think of Fonteyn, she also has a body and brain which responds to music and she was faced with the usual hazards and irregularities that it now seems customary shall issue from the orchestra pit.

Graham Usher makes a Franz whose verve and charm at moments reminded me of the Royal Danish Ballet's Fredbjorn Bjornsson. He was as ready to be fickle, flirtatious and to turn-on the come-hither as any youthful village Lothario. He has the surety of line of an expert draughtsman. His last-act solo was given with such *élan* — perfect jumps and turns — that some of the Royal Ballet's senior Franzs must have been touching their heads to see if their laurels were still in place. I utterly refuse to mention the word effeminate in any connection with his performance but he must guard against a certain softness of movement and gesture from momentarily creeping into his work. He is of the age which if this is not very carefully watched it might become more pronounced and to the detriment of his whole career.

In a ballet of this kind the youthful rôles come naturally to young people; what is far harder is the interpretation of the more aged characters. In playing such parts, younger people often look obviously lined and wigged and their playing becomes equally forced. One of the great beauties of this particular performance was the amazing authenticity brought to matured characters.

TOMORROW'S STARS? : Graham Usher, as Franz, with Antoinette Sibley, as Swanilda, in the production of Coppélia *which was so triumphantly successfully given by the Royal Ballet School at Covent Garden on March 21.* *Photo : Dominic.*

Lambert Cox saw Dr. Coppelius as a crotchety though not unkindly old man whose life obsession was the making of human dolls; he was faithful to this interpretation all through and even managed to achieve genuine pathos when he discovered that Swanilda had cheated him. It is not easy for a boy of eighteen to convey the fact that old blood is coursing through the slightly hardening arteries and it is much to his credit that he succeeded so admirably. With time he will undoubtedly burnish up a few little details. Equally plausible was the Burgomaster of David Gordon, who benignly strolled through the proceedings, generating goodwill, straightening out differences, taking a fatherly attitude towards the children and generally being a kindly-natured rustic leader. Apart from Poul Wessel in Copenhagen I have never seen this rôle so sincerely played. Of the other solo rôles, Aurora and Prayer were danced respectively by Robyn Croft and Deanne Bergsma in the final act. The former is a polished dancer with a sure technique who needs to lose a little of the puppy-fat that is usual at this age, while Deanne Bergsma brought a lovely serene quality to that religious show-stopper. She is a tall girl who uses her height well and has a nice flowing line which recalls the early Beryl Grey and the present Margaret Hill.

Final assessment of solo rôles cannot be made without mention of the dolls in the second act. Seldom have they been so woodenly still and seldom have they become such automatons in motion. Possibly for the first time in history the Chinese doll (Su Chin) got a round of applause; for her, de Valois had created a little extra promenade which I can only hope will be kept in the Royal Ballet's productions along with the other new doll arrangements.

But all of this would not have amounted to a great deal if the *corps* dancing and playing had lagged behind in any way. It was they who formed the perfect frame for their more advanced colleagues. For once the Czardas and the Mazurka started, were danced and finished, on the beat, and I have never seen the Dance of the Morning Hours better given. The mid-day hours were danced, I believe, by the lower school, but there was nothing "lower" about anything they did. Swanilda's six friends possibly lacked the brilliance of their more professional sisters but what they did was immaculately correct. The playing of everyone was completely natural and they looked as though they were enjoying themselves as

much as I and about 2,000 others in the audience.

None of this would have been possible had the students not been so well taught and produced and all praise is due to the staff of the Royal Ballet School and specially to Peggy Van Praagh, Ailne Phillips and Leslie Edwards, who produced them, out of working hours, in under five weeks. Peggy Van Praagh was responsible for supervising the general production and doubtless it is due to her that there were a number of additions, particularly in the mime scenes. For the first time in many years there seemed to be a logical progression in a Royal Ballet *Coppélia* and there seemed a point to everything that happened on the stage. "Don't be too kind to them," said a mature member of the Covent Garden company after the performance, "or else we shall be losing our jobs." Well, there is something in that too. Anyway, let us have more of these performances, they act as a tonic to us all.

P. W.

De Valois ballets return

TWO other revivals during March have been *Checkmate* and *Job*. *Checkmate* was first given on March 4, but as on that occasion Blair as the first Red Knight was clearly indisposed — had he no understudy, or had the understudy no costume? — I am reviewing the subsequent performance on the evening of March 14. *Checkmate* is not a ballet I greatly care for. The idea of a ballet based on a game of chess is probably rather a good one, but somehow it has never caught my fancy. Nor is the choreography of any particularly compelling interest — the opening dance of the Pawns smacks too much of a revue routine, and indeed the whole ballet seems to exist on a rather superficial level.

However there are three good parts in this work and Beryl Grey, radiating evil as the Black Queen, with the enthusiasm of a cinematic sex-goddess radiating allure, did uncommonly well with the choreography. David Blair — even when fit — made not such a lot of the first Red Knight, and was overshadowed by an excellent performance full of decrepit dignity by Leslie Edwards as the Red King. I would liken him to Lear, were it not for the fact that on several occasions this Shakespearean hero has been mentioned in his connection, and I am terrified lest someone with more courage than prudence might one day make Lear into a ballet for him.

Job will always be another of my Achilles' heels — in this respect I am something like a centipede — for I have never even been able to understand, let alone appreciate it. Nowadays, when it is revived every year like a religious festival, I am constantly being surprised that anyone should have thought that a ballet hinged on depicting the sin of spiritual pride could ever have been made stageworthy and explicit.

Vaughan Williams, composer of the score, called his work "A Masque for Dancing", and as such it possibly requires a different approach from that brought to ballet, but for the life of me I cannot quite make out what approach it needs. The choreography for the most part is carried out in a stylised Central European flat-footed manner, to which appears to have been added some element of the "modern Greek dance" — as practised by the Ginner-Mawer school — and certain classical *port de bras* have been superimposed. Incorporated are a number of groupings derived from William Blake's illustrations to the *Book of Job*, and while these are at times dramatically convincing they lose something by being transcribed from the basically non-representational technique of Blake into the all-too-solid and literal flesh of dancers' bodies.

David Blair was making his début in the part of Satan on the revival's first performance on March 19. This rôle was originally created for a *premier danseur* — Anton Dolin — and requires for its full effectiveness (and it is beyond any question of the complete ballet's merits, a most distinguished and rewarding rôle) a corrupt beauty and elegance which probably only a *danseur noble* can easily convey. For a first attempt Blair was most notably successful. Here was a truly fallen angel, still trailing about him his clouds of glory, yet suffused with an evil that made his beauty terrible. However, although I enjoyed Blair's performance, I must still regard the ballet as one of my blind spots.

Another blind spot has recently been brought to my attention. I find that in a moment of crass stupidity I matched up the wrong Dr. Coppélius's with the wrong Swanildas and Franzs in my notes on *Coppélia* last month. Franklin White in fact appeared with Lane and Grant, while Edwards was matched with Park and Burne. Sackcloth and ashes for me, and apologies to all concerned.

C. B.

Grey as Aurora

CAN there be any other ballerina who excites such strong feelings as Beryl Grey? In discussing her, one is always either preaching to the converted, for, quite regardless of her fine technique, she has acquired an enormous throng of admirers who refer to her familiarly as "Our Beryl", or raising the blood pressure of someone who would be quite happy if she were consigned to obscurity.

Her return has a number of fascinating aspects. Reading some of the notices, one could even get the impression that it was an honourable failure. One could also conclude that, since her appearance at the Bolshoi, she has gone to reckless lengths to mimic Soviet ballerinas. As it happens, neither of these judgments is correct.

But although her style has been transformed since she was a member of the Royal Ballet, modifications were becoming increasingly evident, at least to anyone reasonably perceptive, long *before* she danced in the Soviet Union. For a dancer of her height, it is only sensible that she should wish to exploit her line to maximum effect, and it is only natural that she should employ a teacher, such as De Vos, who can best develop her qualities. Her arms have always been fluent and eloquent, she has high, effortless extensions, and her back is especially well-controlled — qualities, few will argue, more common in Soviet than British dancers anyway.

She has had many performances as Aurora, which she first danced in 1946, and in most respects the rôle suits her. Although her interpretation has become more scrupulously detailed and consistent, her success is mainly due to her dancing. The uncomfortable formalities with her parents on her first entrance are her stickiest moment.

Her Rose Adagio was not remarkable until the last balance of all. Then she wrenched herself free from support to take her arms down and then up again with a superb flourish, all the while maintaining her balance. Her Vision Scene is very well-danced, but the interpretation seems faintly eccentric, perhaps faintly Odile — very much flesh and blood and seductive and teasing, rather than the elusive being.

Her last act *variation* was done with genuine musical feeling, and she has a dashing attack for virtuosity when it is needed. Hence the *grand pas de deux* went well. Caj Selling, who must have hidden reserves of strength when one takes into account his tall slight build, held her almost vertically in the "fish dives". Her footwork has become very neat again, but her *pirouettes*, especially the supported ones, seem laboured and erratic; also the line of her *attitude* is not always pleasing, and some of her exits are a little too affected.

Nevertheless, there are so many things that she does well, that I find it impossible not to enjoy her dancing. Although she has a few more tricks up her sleeve, there is an integrity and sincerity about her approach which places her outside the realm of mere showmanship. Her warm personality filled the stage as it has always done, and one never glimpsed a trace of self-congratulation.

But her style has changed so much, and her interpretation now deviates so greatly from those of the Auroras we have been nurtured on — at least until Chauviré's advent as guest-artist — that her performances, too, must be judged as those of a guest-artist. One wonders whether her fresh approach to her classical rôles has set a good example?

Caj Selling's portrayal of the Prince is refreshingly different — logical and naturalistic rather than stylised and cardboard. Although I do not care for his dancing, he is a most courteous and self-effacing partner. He has many engaging moments and is apparently irresistible to the audience when he breaks into a broad grin. I liked his quiet lead into the Vision Scene, when he is in pensive mood with hand tucked under his chin.

I also liked Rosemary Lindsay's Lilac Fairy. Her mime is clear and her personality stronger — although she does seem to have to work unnecessarily hard at times to assert her authority Gerd Larsen's dissatisfied Countess and Derek Rencher's King, which is promising although a little over-simplified, are both satisfactory interpretations. Maryon Lane danced her "Finger" *variation* with still more attack and *bravura*, and it was all the more effective.

E. C. M.

The season of a guest star

BERYL GREY'S series of guest appearances with the Royal Ballet ended on April 2 with a performance of *Swan Lake*. The applause rang through the house as Grey took curtain call after curtain call, the cheers welling up to Ulanova proportions. She quite clearly established a contact with her audience that certainly no other English dancer, except perhaps Markova and Fonteyn, could rival. Her partner Caj Selling also customarily received receptions that were almost equally overwhelming — I don't think I have ever heard Somes, Blair and Co. bowing to the kind of hula-baloo that seemed the normal portion of this diffident, smiling young Swede.

Now while I personally felt no inclination to throw my cap in the air with the same unbuttoned enthusiasm that I saw all around me, the frenzy of these receptions was obviously significant, and could not be entirely explained by the natural warmth of feeling due to either a guest artist or a prodigal daughter. Neither Moira Shearer nor Yvette Chauviré — when they appeared in somewhat similar circumstances — ever succeeded in sparking off such a spectacular public reaction. On the whole the critical

reaction has also been extremely favourable if perhaps a little more reserved, and any carpings of critics must in fairness just be heard as a murmuring undertow to the full-throated roar of public acclaim.

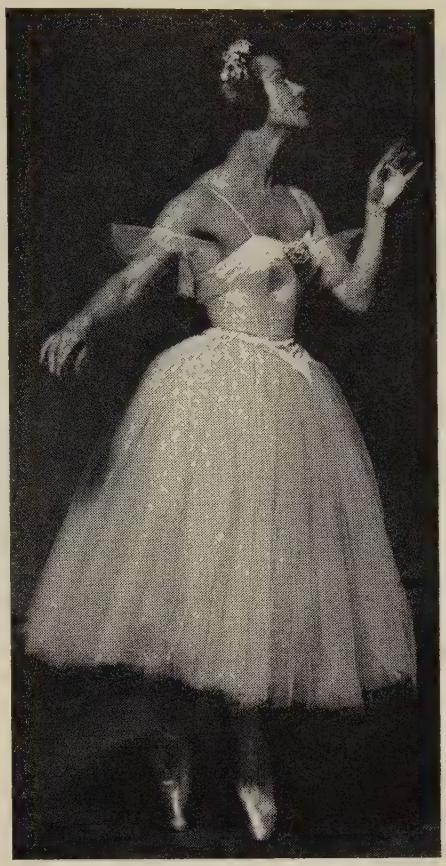
For myself I found a great deal to enjoy in all these performances — apart from *The Sleeping Beauty,* which left me very cold indeed — yet throughout I was conscious of the natural limitations of a free-lance dancer, growing up outside the disciplined confines of an established company. Here and there you find a Markova who can apparently survive artistically in the cold world outside, but I feel the case with Grey is somewhat different. In some respects Grey is now a more assured dancer than she was when she left the company two years ago — she is, incidentally, at that crucial age at the beginning of her thirties when one expects a ballerina to develop, sometimes quite startlingly — yet personally I cannot feel that this new maturity is as interesting as it should have been, or might have been. Despite the height and proportions which always set her something apart from her fellows, and meant that certain problems of dance dynamics had to be given a completely individual solution, she was always a very *English* dancer with an English style, English personality and, possibly most important, an English face. What she seems to have done now is to have adapted for her own use a whole series of Bolshoi attitudes, gestures and mannerisms, and these have been applied with the conscious care of make-up, but they have yet to become completely assimilated and they seem to stay outside the person like that veneer of Americanism adopted by so many Cockney crooners.

Even before she left the Royal Ballet, Grey had a number of mannerisms and affectations which now appear to have been allowed to run riot. Her hand movements in particular must be just about the most tasteless I can recall from an established ballerina, and her acting is too often undisciplined and unsubtle.

All this sounds very harsh, and certainly would not have been written were it not for the fact that at times in her performances there can be glimpsed the authentic glint of the great dancer — and great is a word I would apply to a mere handful in contemporary Western ballet. Sometimes her fluidity and musicality in pure dance passages, when she seems to forget all her pseudo-Russian mannerisms and her audience-conscious smiles, forges a unity between the dance and music which is a thing of most precious and rare beauty. I cannot help feeling — and this is so clearly a minority opinion that I present it with the greatest diffidence — that she needs firstly to clarify and simplify her general dance style, and, this is the difficulty, find an established company and a great choreographer — Balanchine perhaps — who could invent for her the stunning *enchaînements* she needs to come to complete fulfilment.

Her performance in *Giselle* on March 17 showed her at her best and at her worst. Her first act was overplayed in a coarse and hearty manner, and her Mad Scene — which many of my colleagues admired — struck me as cold, affected and superficial. Yet in the second act she achieved many moments of wide-spanned loveliness. Her broad, generous dancing swept across the stage without so much as a trace of mannerism or falsity.

Caj Selling made a promising Albrecht, although here, as elsewhere, his Stanislavsky naturalistic style of mime found itself at odds with the Maryinsky stylised semi-semaphor system still employed by the Royal Ballet. While he can take comfort in the fact that really everyone was out of step except Selling, it certainly did not help him to fit into the productions. His Albrecht, a foolish, feckless boy, reminded me in approach very much of Skibine — even in small details such as when he fluently lies to Bathilde that he has been out hunting. His partnering in this as everywhere was commendable but only 95% assured, with the odd 5% placing a responsibility on his



MARINA SVETLOVA, the former Ballet Russe dancer and famous concert artist, who recently danced at the Hintlesham ballet festival and who this month will make a concert tour of Britain. Her group will include, amongst others, Margit Muller and Kenneth Melville. The repertory will include a new work — Marionettes *— by Jack Carter.*
Photo : East Anglian Daily Times

ballerina which she should not have been expected to have carried.

His dancing was chiefly distinguished by its most effortless and delightful *ballon,* which gave all his steps of elevation a fresh zephyr quality that was good to see. On the other hand he looked just a bit turned-in, and his general technical equipment had too little finesse, and a generally soft quality that could probably only be removed by years of work with a strong male teacher. He has a dazzling personality — which immediately established him in the audience's favour — and I could only wish he could work with the Royal Ballet alongside some of our younger dancers, feeling sure that in a few years he could be built into a first-rate *premier danseur.*

The final performance of *Swan Lake* with which these two ended their guest season was possibly the most notable of the whole series. Grey, in particular, was in superlative form, and the touching insouciance of Selling — a terribly young and engaging prince — was shown to the very best advantage. The Black Swan *pas de deux* lacked a lot of the Nerina/Blair *éclat,* but Beryl Grey's king-sized grandeur as the Swan Queen made it a far more effective performance than her first, which was reviewed last month by Peter Williams. **C. B.**

Cast changes, sudden and otherwise

ON the general repertory front, interest has centred chiefly on the production of *La Valse* and *Danses Concertantes,* both of which are discussed elsewhere in this issue. There have, however, also been cast changes in *La Fête Etrange* and *Harlequin in April.*

The performance of Derek Rencher as the Bridegroom in *La Fête Etrange* clearly came as much of a surprise to the wardrobe department as it did to the audience. Due to a minor injury to Ronald Hynd, Rencher — the understudy — stepped in at very short notice one Saturday matinée, and had to wear a black doublet from *La Valse,* together with a pair of odd tights. Visually the result was most peculiar, and I find it remarkable that the Opera House should not have taken the elementary precaution of ensuring that they not only had an understudy for the part but also had a proper costume to fit him. While this was remarkable, it was simply incredible that in the evening he had to go on again in the same impromptu get-up. Having been caught out once I should have thought the wardrobe department could have worked throughout the afternoon in making the necessary alterations to ensure that this was not repeated. Altogether it was a most inefficient piece of organisation.

Despite the double disadvantage of short notice and short costume, Rencher contrived to give a very creditable performance of this difficult part. He was less frigid and haughty than Hynd, and his hesitant moment of indecision before his final exit was extremely well done. This, like all the rôles in Howard's wonderful ballet, lends itself to almost any number of subtly different interpretations, and Rencher's much more immature Bridegroom was in its way almost as effective as Hynd's, although the contrast with the Country Boy proved not so marked.

The second cast of *Harlequin in April* took over the ballet on March 19. Pirmin Trecu is an old hand as Harlequin, and dramatically his portrayal has lost nothing since his days with the Theatre Ballet. His birth and death are still most sensitively conveyed, and the wide-eyed innocence of idealistic aspiration, with the following heartbreak of disillusionment, is poetically suggested with a simple economy of expression and gesture. His dancing was not so downright brilliant as Blair's, yet I understand that he was at the time far from fit and on this programme was dancing three leading rôles. He subsequently went on sick leave.

Doreen Wells made a pert Columbine, in some ways more like the part's creator, Patricia Miller, than its later incumbent Antoinette Sibley. She proved a rather less radiant Columbine than Sibley, and although in one respect she was more pathetic as the timorous plant she lacked the astonishing plasticity of movement Sibley achieves in this part. Both are good, excellently danced interpretations.

Ray Powell made very heavy weather as the part of Pierrot, which he turned into a humourless, facetious crank. At this performance the rôle's pathos was demoted to sentimentality and mawkishness, but this particular demarcation line is one always

difficult to draw and it may well be that Powell will grow into this part as he has that of Bootface in *Lady and the Fool.*

C. B.

CARMEN AMAYA

NOT long after the war with the first bunch of exotics, which included Katherine Dunham's negro company, Amaya came to Princes Theatre. Her show was vital and thrilling and she brought on most of her family. who were seen against some rather shabby but strangely right settings. A few years later she came again, but this time she was all slicked-up in shiny sateen drapes and in a too big theatre. Now, for the third time, she returns to the intimate Westminster Theatre, and somehow the balance seems right.

She has surrounded herself with a young but promising group of dancers, a flamenco singer (Rafael Ortega) and three guitarists. Though the accent is mainly on flamenco there are also scenes of 18th century classical, regional and zarzuela (operetta). The mixture is very much as is usual with these Iberian occasions.

Everything has been designed as a showcase for Amaya herself, but it is an extremely agreeable showcase and there are few of those boring passages when one just longs for the star to come back. As in the next issue I intend to write a feature article on the art of this great gypsy dancer and personality, I will only say here that her powers are undimmed by the passing years and that she is every bit as volatile and dynamic as ever she was. On no account must she be missed, and, as her season has been extended indefinitely, there is no reason why you should.

The rest of the company open with three classical numbers — from Granados' *Goyescas, Bolero de la Cachucha* (music always associated with Alberto Lorca) and Albeniz' *Seguidillas.* If these lacked the ultimate perfection and precision that would seem to be an essential in all 18th century classical work, the dancing was pleasant and the arrangement was unaffected and effective enough. It was in the later *Cuadro Flamenco* that the company as a whole came into its own and in a *Bulerias* they all revealed decided talents. The excerpt from the zarzuela, *The Wedding of Luis Alonzo,* was hardly suited to their ebullient style and I felt that Amaya herself did not help matters by appearing in white trousers at the end of it. On the other hand they all fell naturally into the dances from Malaga and Saragossa which came later in the programme. Two interludes of guitar music from José Motos were more lively than is usual. Spain seems set to bring life and fire to the stately purlieus of Westminster for some time to come.

P. W.

TELEVISION

Janine Charrat and Milorad Miskovitch

In Music For You **on BBC Television on March 22. The "Snowflake"** pas de deux. **Music from Glazounov's** Raymonda. **Choreography, Volinine. Producer, Patricia Foy.**

Dusanka Sifnios and Dusan Trninic

In Chelsea At Nine on **Independent Television on March 18. The "Bedchamber" scene from** Romeo and Juliet. **Music, Prokofiev. Décor, Dan Snyder. Choreography, Dimitri Parlic. Producer, Eric Fawcett.**

THESE two programmes provide a good excuse for contrasting two methods of production. But before dealing with comparisons, it is also worth pointing out that there are certain other dance items which hardly need production at all. Both channels provided good examples of this some weeks back when the BBC presented the Silva Ivars troupe from Madrid, and ITV, Esmeralda and Pepe de Lara.

Although both of these programmes of "exotic dances of Spain" had no artistic merit and were in fact cabaret fare, and not even well danced at that, both were entertaining and quite effective as television. But why should cabaret dancers so clearly have an advantage over more serious dance?

One obvious reason is that ballet is not conceived by its choreographer to be seen in the round. Were it not for the fact that so many producers of ballet on television seem unaware of this, such a statement would appear a platitude! Moreover, dancers are accustomed to having their audience in a fixed spot — not changing, as do the cameras. from the left to the right or from over their heads to under their feet.

It seems that a special sense must be acquired for TV by the dancers if they are to be seen at their best. They must be continually aware of shifting cameras and know just how their positioning will change and and distort the shape of the dance. For a camera which tracks a dancer too relentlessly can take all the *épaulement* out of a *variation.* It can also virtually put it in where it was not intended by concentrating on poses taken from wrong angles. Generally, I think, the latter is done more out of carelessness and an ignorance of ballet than to any commendable striving after genuine artistic effects.

The two Yugoslav dancers, Sifnios and Trninic, received exceptionally bad camera treatment. And, so unusual for ITV, not even expensive treatment! Certainly Parlic's choreography for *Romeo and Juliet* is sometimes contrived and too dependent on establishing poses and tableaux. Moreover, as this particular excerpt is not one of his best, its choice was somewhat baffling.

There was much toing and froing of cameras, with decapitations and the dancers moving in and out of vision quite arbitrarily and occasionally being allowed to mask each other. But objections do not end there. To make matters worse, the décor was repulsive. I could not visualise Juliet slipping in between the sheets of the enormous satin-quilted bed which seemed more in character for Mmes. Pompadour and Dubarry. There were also odd arches and a great loop of shiny curtain to complete the tangled mess, which was assembled rather than designed.

The best that can be said of the production, which I understand was filmed, was that the technicians refrained from knocking things over in the corner of the studio during the more romantic interludes. Sifnios did some attractive high *arabesques* in deep *plié,* and Trninic, who has an unusually soft quality, did some excellent *attitude* turns.

While Independent Television is often more enterprising in its selection of artists, sometimes even reckless, the BBC maintains a more even quality and it generally handles its ballet programmes more sensibly. But, if I may hark back, works designed for the theatre are not easily enhanced by television cameras. The BBC has obviously had the time to become aware of this.

This Charrat-Miskovitch programme was a good example of unrestricted production. There were no decorations — merely a dark backcloth to set off the dancers and simple but appropriate lighting. There was only one close-up. The dancers were in full vision the whole time and, for once, one was able to judge them.

Both were in excellent form and the *variations* were danced with great aplomb and attack. Charrat has an excellent understanding of ballerina *bravura* style and very good taste in presentation. This was, I believe, one of the last pieces choreographed by Volinine and it was all the more interesting for being unfamiliar. The *adagio* was extremely difficult and possibly a little unrewarding — supported *arabesques penchées* with a pull-up after each one.

In her *variation* Charrat did a good *manège* of turns in a limited space, and (working the *pas de deux* up to a climax), a series of *arabesques* hopping back quickly along a diagonal path into an *arabesque* on point. Miskovitch was as elegant as ever and no less effective. The dancers achieved a very nice balance between technique and presentation — the work in fact seemed ideal for the television omnibus programme which requires ballet only in small doses.

E. C. M.

Dance and Dancers . . . . ABROAD

FRANCE

LUDMILLA TCHERINA

DANCE, the cinema, and oratorio have all in their turn attracted Ludmilla Tcherina. It was therefore natural that her production should reflect all these vocations. She has risen brilliantly to the challenge, and owes her success not to any revolutionary qualities, but to the attention that has been paid to detail and to the general cohesion of her company. In other words, the qualities of craftsmanship and lucidity are evident — and it's these which are often lacking in young companies which are usually more outstanding for their enthusiasm than their organisation. But unfortunately she has paid greater homage to the theatre than to the dance.

The key work of the programme — *Les Amants de Téruel* — is the work of the producer, Raymond Rouleau, who has personally supervised the presentation of this drama in mime right down to the last detail. The plot is happily simple. blending as it does reality and fiction. It is thoughtfully and at some length worked out right to the final tragedy. Milko Sparemblek, the choreographer, is ill-served by the composer, Mikis Theodorakis, and has too little scope. Ludmilla Tcherina's tragic performance is supported by that of Vassili Sulitch's, which combines a gentle seriousness and ease of movement. Milko Sparemblek lends a diabolic finesse to his portrait of the jealous murderer.

Ella Bogval is ingenuous and charming in the late-lamented Edmond Audran's minor work, *Le loup et l'agneau. Atout-Coeur* is an agreeable curtain-raiser, but in spite of Maurice Thiriet's lovely score, Don Lurio and Roger Pierre fail to succeed in rivalling Roland Petit.

Feu aux poudres owes little more than its theme to Jean Renoir. Paul Goubé, who is a conscientious *maître de ballet,* has not managed to bridge the gap in his choreography between Renoir's original conception and the final result. The dancers, however, make up for much — especially Lud-

LA MER : *Maurice Béjart and Maria Fris in the* pas de deux *which Béjart created for the Paris Season of his Theatre Ballet which comes to Sadler's Wells in July.*

MARCHAND IN THE MUSIC HALL : Colette Marchand, in a costume designed by André Levasseur, with George Reich in a pas de deux *from their music hall appearance at the Olympia Theatre in Paris.* *Photos: Lido.*

milla Tcherina with her authoritative presence, and Stevan Grebel. who previously made an impression in *Mandarin merveilleux* by the elegance of his style. The decorative Tcherina, however, is far more at home in the science-fiction episode than in the bacchanale.

UKRAINIAN COSSACK DANCERS

FROM its first performance on February 27 at the Alhambra Theatre, this Ukrainian dance company charmed its public which had already been won over by its rival, the Moiseyev Folk Dance Ensemble. Directed by Paul Virsky, it combines vitality with artistic sensibility and a careful regard for choreography. It thus equals the Muscovite troupe, and is able to stand out from the numerous popular *ensembles* which are often over-detailed and dull. The director's classical background has enabled him to enrich satisfactorily the original folk-dance motifs which he has used — as, of course, was also the case with the Moiseyev and Beriozka companies.

The soft charm of the girls in their red boots is set off by the extraordinary virtuosity of the male dancers, with their jumps from crouching positions, gopak steps, *jetés en tournant* and never-ending *pirouettes*. The interest in their prowess lies however in the inventiveness of the production and the obvious ease with which the technique is displayed. The costumes, whose dazzling colours are reminiscent of those of Nathalie Gontcharova, are in the very best of taste. Those strident greens and pinks which are too frequently evident in this type of dance spectacle are avoided.

Three items of the choreographer's art in particular remain in one's memory : there is the charming *Miatelitza,* depicting New Year celebrations ; but above all the Embroidery Dance, which is outstanding for the ingenuity of its designs, and the Cossack *Zaporogues,* in which only the simplest methods are used to achieve true grandeur.

MAURICE BEJART'S BALLET THEATRE

FOLLOWING an absence of nearly two years from Paris, Maurice Béjart presented from March 9-15 at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées the most important results of his current experiments in dance. Two revivals were given and by comparing these with recent works, it was possible to determine the extent of his progress. His *Symphonie pour une homme seul* differs from his latest line of choreography and, like all works which caused a stir on their first appearance — *Parade* for example — already shows signs of dating. The ideas which were prevalent then have since been developed to greater effect. On the other hand, *Haut-Voltage,* in which Milorad Miskovitch previously gave such a striking interpretation. has kept the impact of its originality.

As so often happens when programmes are devoted to displaying the work of one choreographer, his were badly planned and similar works were juxtaposed. Why, for example, could not *Pulcinella,* which has an orthodox score, have been inserted? It would have thrown his other ballets into proper relief.

While Balanchine's choreography is sometimes too bound by the music, Béjart's goes to the other extreme. Also, one can accuse him of an excessive use of the second position, and a lack of pliancy in his *enchaînements.* While any attempt at a new style is welcome, it should never become a purely mechanical process. And then admitting that dance speaks a language of its own . . . spoken explanations should only be used in exceptional cases.

Etudes rhythmiques, Violetta, Juliette, La voix and *Concertino* are works which have recently been reviewed by Peter Williams. *La Mer,* however, is a more recent work. It is a good-natured and typically Mediterranean story of a romantic episode in Marseilles — Béjart's native town. This fresh idyllic piece was danced with humour by the choreographer himself and the charming Maria Fris.

Together with Béjart, the following dancers attracted attention : Janine Monin, Tania Bari, Michèle Seigneuret and Jean Blanchard. Patrick Belda has a gift of elevation. but it would certainly be to his advantage to follow a more classical school for the complete development of his style. Antonio Cano has a physical presence which does much to augment his technique and expression.

However, the most eagerly awaited work was his full-length :

Orphée

Given on March 13 by Maurice Béjart's Ballet Theatre at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées. A choreographic drama in two acts and eight scenes by Maurice Béjart. Music concrète by Pierre Henry. Décors and costumes by Rudolf Kufner.

Orphee ..... MAURICE BEJART
His Shadow ... MICHELE SEIGNEURET
Eurydice ..... TANIA BARI
A Young Girl ... EVELYNE MAUBERT
Venus : Death ..... JANINE MONIN
The Soldier ..... ANTONIO CANO
A Young Man ..... J. MODINI
and *corps de ballet*

THIS ambitious work was first danced at Liège some months ago. It lasts a whole evening and typifies the choreographer's present trend. In it the choreographer not only lays bare his own personality, but also that of his whole epoch. On both counts

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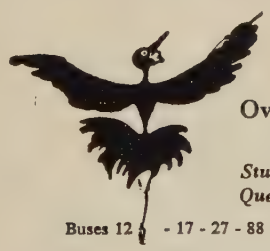

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the ballet is an important example of a contemporary tendency: a sort of perverse romanticism in which sexual frenzy replaces idealised love, and in which studied and discordant mechanisation are substituted for rapture and warmth.

Furthermore, the Oriental and very expressionistic influences which the choreographer has felt are personal to himself. They are, however, in accordance with certain ideas prevalent in modern art — for example, in the works of Bernard Buffet and Pierre Boullez. As a reaction against the lyricism which is especially recurrent in Cocteau's work, a kind of aesthetic of ugliness has been set up, and this typifies a modern line of thought.

On the technical plane, this is translated by tortuous poses. Bodies spread out, splits in second position, feet turned up, stretched out Picasso-like hand positions, turned-in movements and poses, plus a taste for daring acrobatics. It all sets out to strike a violent blow at the sensibilities of a public which has been dulled by the perpetual shocks of contemporary life.

Maurice Béjart, who is constantly on stage, gives a sincere interpretation. He is well supported by Janine Monin, whose classical training can from time to time be glimpsed. Michèle Seigneuret is a morbid Shadow: her rôle having nothing in common with the Shadow in *Les Mirages.*

Pierre Henry has provided an ingenious stereophonic score: a background which utilises Oriental instruments and complex percussion and which is frequently punctuated by harsh sounds. Rudolf Kufner's designs and costumes are well suited to the general climate of the work . . . sometimes sinister as for Eurydice's death, and on other occasions phantasmagoric. The first three scenes, especially the bizarre Oriental one, are enhanced by ingenious lighting.

Those purists dedicated to Greek mythology will shudder at the use to which Homer has been put. But *Orphée* is a product of our troubled times. Only today could this theme be interpreted in complete contradiction to Rilke's assertion that "to sing is to be". What has become of the lyricism of Orpheus's song which could in itself charm wild beasts, where is romantic tenderness of love which could conquer itself . . . but then, where are the carefree days of our childhood?

NEWS IN BRIEF

REHEARSALS are now in progress at the Opera-Comique for Peter Van Dijk's new ballet. Inspired by Balzac's *La Peau de Chagrin,* the work will possess a specially composed score by Ivan Semenoff and décor by Jean-Pierre Ponnelle.

The Opera of Essen has just staged *Abîmes.* This work, with its fantastic theme, has a score by Marcel Landowsky. choreography by Marcel Luipart, and décor by Yves Bonnat. Its leading dancer, Dulce Anaya, created Henze's *Ondine* in Germany.

Colette Marchand made her début at the Olympia Music Hall on February 19.

At Cannes on March 7, the International Ballet of the Marquis de Cuevas staged a new ballet, *Voyage vers l'amour.* The choreography was by Massine, John Taras, Mariemma and Eltsoff, and the music by Rebekah Harkness.

After a ten-year absence from Paris, José Greco is to give a season at the Palais de Chaillot from May 10-28.

Marie-Françoise Christout.

AMERICA

THE BOLSHOI BALLET

THE Bolshoi Ballet of Moscow opened its first American engagement at the Metropolitan Opera House on April 16 with a performance of Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet.* Other full-length ballets shown during the three and a half week New York season included *Giselle, Swan Lake,* Prokofiev's *The Stone Flower,* the latter for its first appearance outside of Russia. There were also two "Highlight" programmes consisting of excerpts from Fokine's *Chopiniana, Spartacus, The Fountain of Bakhchiserai, The Forest Devil, Yarmark, Night on Bald Mountain* and other shorter works.

Headed by Galina Ulanova, the roster of dancers included Raissa Struchkova, Ludmila Bogomolova, Nina Chistova, Marina Kondratieva, Ekaterina Maximova, Alla Osipenko, Nina Timofeyeva and Maya Samokhvalova. The male roster included Nicolai Fadeyechev, Yuri Zhdanov, Alexander Gribov, Boris Khokhlov, Alexander Lapari, Gennadi Lediakh, Vladimir Levashev, Alexander Radunsky, Yaroslav Sekh and Vladimir Vasiliev. Two additional ballerinas and one male dancer were also added for the American engagement. They were Alla Osipenko, a ballerina from the Leningrad company on loan to the Bolshoi for the American tour, and Maya Samokhvalova. Vladimir Vasiliev, who partners 19-year-old Ekaterina Maximova in *The Stone Flower,* is the youngest dancer in the company and celebrated his 19th birthday in New York on April 19.

Leonid Lavrovsky, principal choreographer; Yuri Faier, principal conductor; Vadim Rindin, principal designer; and Gennadi Rozhdestvensky, conductor, accompanied the troupe, whose total personnel numbers between 170 and 200. In addition, an orchestra of ninety American musicians played with the company in N.Y. and on tour.

Admission prices for this costly project are the highest in American history, with box seats at $50 and orchestra seats at $40 and $30 for the Gala Première. After opening night the scale for orchestra and box seats was $15 and $12.45, and matinée seats in the same location were $10.50, and it is estimated that weekly receipts will average around $100,000. Before returning home, the Bolshoi Ballet is due to play a return New York engagement at Madison Square Garden with a series of "Highlight" programmes.

JAPANESE DANCERS

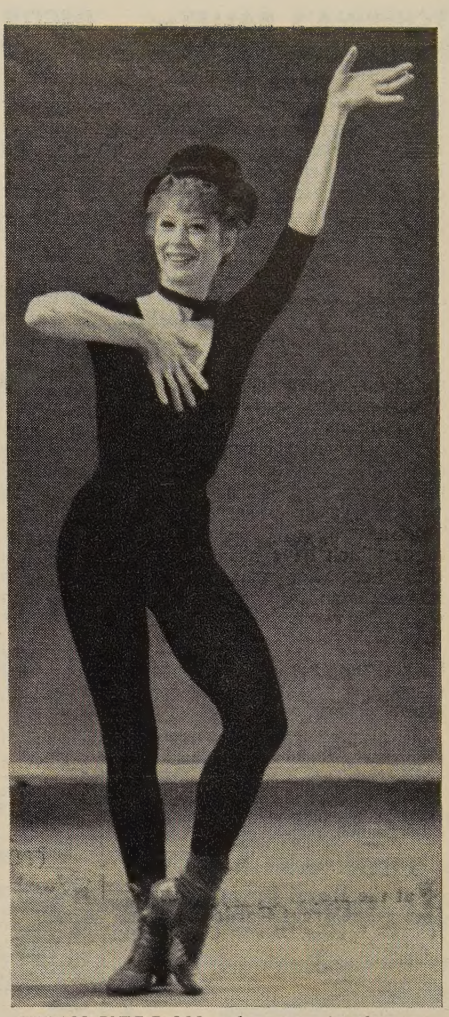
GAGAKU, the dancers and musicians of the Japanese imperial household, are to appear with the New York City Ballet, commencing May 21 at the City Centre. These mark the first performances of this all-male group outside of Japan and they will appear in the regular programmes of the New York City Ballet, against a background setting similar to the one employed at the Imperial Palace, in four different programmes. Their visit to the United States has been made possible by the Society for International Cultural Relations in Japan and the Japan Society in New York in conjunction with the New York City Centre of Music and Drama.

GRAHAM WITH N.Y. CITY BALLET

NEWS of historic importance to the international dance field has been made by the announcement of Lincoln Kirstein, General Director of the New York City Ballet, that Martha Graham, the distinguished American dancer, will be associated with George Balanchine, Artistic Director of this noted company, in the creation of a new dance work by the modern Austrian twelve-tone composer, Anton Webern (1883-1946).

Kirstein said that as a result of conversations extending over more than a decade Graham will not only choreograph the dances for some of the Webern compositions but that she will also appear in them during the regular repertory season starting May 12. Martha Graham will compose and appear in the extended opening and closing sections of the Webern ballet which, in all, may run well over an hour.

This is the first time that Martha Graham has devised dances for an independent organisation other than her own company. It is also the first time in American dance history that the two leading exponents of modern dance and the academic classic ballet have worked together jointly. All of this augurs well for the Third Section of New York City Ballet's Tenth Anniversary Season.



GWEN VERDON, who stars in the new Broadway musical, Redhead, *which will be reviewed next month along with other new musicals.*

NEWS IN BRIEF

ALLEGRA KENT, of the New York City Ballet, has married photographer Bert Stearns.

MARIA TALLCHIEF'S first appearance professionally since the birth of her daughter was on the Bell Telephone Hour, a national television programme, where she was partnered by Andre Eglevsky.

MARTHA GRAHAM'S film, *A Dancer's World,* commenced its first New York run at the 55th Street Playhouse.

KOVACH and Rabovsky have been appearing in the Easter stage presentation at the Radio City Music Hall.

Arthur Todd.

TCHERINA'S BALLET— DECOR

Continued from page 21

ing of the final ballet—*Le Feu aux Poudres* clumsily translated into *Gunpowder Flash.*

The gimmick here was that it was designed by Tcherina herself. I am told that in London the stage was too small for a great deal of the scenery but I cannot imagine that additional pieces of scenery would have done much to improve the fundamental artistic insecurity of the whole conception. This was presumably intended to be a comedy ballet on a rather Offenbachian theme and such works need to be designed with a subtle wit. The wit, such as it was, amounted to a body blow below the belt of artistic sensibility. In the two opposite camps — the leisure-loving Molivians and the austere Strongolians — the Molivians looked like a third touring company of *The Arcadians* and the Strongolians like those "machine" numbers in Casino de Paris revues of the 'thirties. As the High Priestess of Strongolia, Tcherina appeared in the black all-over tights which have almost become a uniform with her; her masculine counterpart in Molivia was in a similar garment only in white. Heavy symbolism if you like!

All these characters gambolled and battled against a deep blue setting with some highly-coloured though meaningless, to me at any rate, objects.

If this were just a scratch company from anywhere, we should sigh, say "What a pity" and then forget about it. But Tcherina has a name in France and anything she does most, to a certain extent, represent France. If the first and the last two ballets in any way represent present French taste then I can only fear that French designing has become as rocky as French economics. To us who have upheld French taste against all denigrators it is a bitter blow, a blow only softened by the undoubted mastery of Jacques Dupont.

Peter Williams.

COVER STORIES

This month's front cover, by Annemarie Heinrich, is of Tamara Toumanova and Vladimir Oukhtomsky in one of the pas de deu—Le Chevalier et la Princesse—**which they will give during their four-week season at the Sadler's Wells Theatre.**

TOUMANOVA was born in Russia, in a train, while her mother was fleeing from the revolution. Eventually, after several years of struggle, she found her way to Paris, where she studied almost entirely with Olga Preobrajenska. It was in that school that she was seen by Balanchine, who engaged her for his two ballets — *Cotillon* and *La Concurrence* — for Col. de Basil's Ballet Russe in 1932. Then she was only a girl of 13. Later she joined Balanchine's Les Ballets 1933 but in 1934 she was back again as a star of Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, with which company she remained for four years. After a period in a Broadway musical, Toumanova went back to Col. de Basil's company, and then, in 1943, went back to Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo and also appeared with Ballet Theatre. At this time she also went to Hollywood and made films. In 1947 she returned to Europe, to the Paris Opéra, and later became the star of the Marquis de Cuevas company and guest ballerina with London's Festival Ballet. In recent years she has made a number of films as well as making many concert tours, principally in South America, and appearing as guest ballerina with some of the world's most notable companies.

OUKHTOMSKY was a pupil of the famous ballerina, Julia Sedova. In 1945 he was engaged by Serge Lifar for his Nouveau Ballet de Monte Carlo, which was then being formed. In this company he danced his first important rôles. Later he joined the Marquis de Cuevas company and became one of its principal dancers. With that company he toured the world, later returning to Paris for the formation of Janine Charrat's company, where he also created a number of rôles. Since then he has partnered many ballerinas in concerts, including Chauviré. He was chosen by Toumanova to parner her at La Scala, Milan, and has since toured the world as her partner.

Ballet Dates

THE ROYAL BALLET
at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden

April
21 *The Firebird, Danses Concertantes, Job*
25 **(M)** *Le Lac des Cygnes* (Beriosova, Ashbridge)
25 **(E)** *Coppélia* (Park, Burne), *La Valse*
27 *Le Lac des Cygnes* (Beriosova, Ashbridge)
30 *Le Lac des Cygnes* (Nerina, Blair)
May
2 **(M)** *Danses Concertantes, Petrushka, Les Patineurs*
Le Lac des Cygnes (Seymour, MacLeary)
9 **(E)** *Coppélia* (Alexander, Britton), *La Valse*
11 *Les Patineurs, Giselle* (Heaton, MacLeary)
13 *Les Patineurs, Giselle* (Beriosova, Ashbridge)
16 *Les Rendez-vous, La Fête Etrange, The Firebird*
18 *The Sleeping Beauty* (Beriosova, Ashbridge
20 *Danses Concertantes, Giselle* (Jackson, Chatfield)
21 *Les Sylphides, Petrushka, Les Rendezvous*
23 **(M)** *The Sleeping Beauty* (Linden, Blair)
23 **(E)** *The Sleeping Beauty* (Jackson, Chatfield)
25 *Les Sylphides, Harlequin in April, The Firebird*
26 *Danses Concertantes, Giselle* (Jackson, Chatfield)
30 **(M)** *Les Patineurs, Danses Concertantes, The Sleeping Beauty* Act 3
June
2 *Ondine* (Fonteyn, Somes)
5 *Les Rendezvous, Symphonic Variations, Daphnis and Chlöe*
6 **(M)** *Les Sylphides, Les Patineurs, The Firebird*
6 **(E)** *Ondine* (Fonteyn, Somes)
10 *The Sleeping Beauty* (Nerina, Blair)
11 *Les Rendezvous, Symphonic Variations, Daphnis and Chlöe*
13 **(M)** *The Sleeping Beauty* (Linden, Blair)
13 **(E)** *Les Rendezvous, Symphonic Variations, Daphnis and Chlöe*
15 *Giselle* (Fonteyn, Somes), *Danses Concertantes*
20 **(M)** *The Sleeping Beauty* (Jackson, Chatfield)
20 **(E)** *Ondine* (Fonteyn, Somes)
End of ballet season

THE ROYAL BALLET (TOURING SECTION)

May
11 The Pavilion, Bournemouth (with Linden and Blair)
18 The New Theatre, Cardiff (with Nerina and Blair)
26 The Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham (2 weeks, with Nerina, Linden and Blair)
June
8 The King's Theatre, Southsea
15 The Essoldo, Brighton

LONDON'S FESTIVAL BALLET

April
7-May 13. Teatro Liceo, Barcelona.
14-20 Zarzuela Theatre, Madrid
23-26 Grand Théâtre de l'Opéra, Bordeaux
29, 30 Théâtre de l'Opéra, Dijon
June
2, 3 Nuovo Teatro, Turin
5-7 Teatro Margaretta, Genoa
11-14 Stadt Theatre, Zurich
16-18 Théâtre de l'Exposition, Lausanne
20 Théâtre de l'Opera, Vichy
22 The Pavilion, Bournemouth (1 week)
29 The New Theatre, Oxford (1 week)
July
14 The Royal Festival Hall, London (until Sept. 12)
Sept.
14 The Theatre Royal, Dublin (1 week)

BALLET RAMBERT

April
20 The Opera House, Jersey
27 The White Rock Pavilion, Hastings
May
25 The Sadler's Wells Theatre, London (2 weeks)
June
8 The Essoldo Theatre, Brighton
July
15 Jacob's Pillow, Mass., U.S.A. (3 weeks)

TAMARA TOUMANOVA
with Wladimir Oukhtomsky at the Sadler's Wells Theatre, London, on April 13 for 4 weeks.

Programme for 2nd week: *Theme and Variation, Nutcracker Suite, Gamayoun, The Warrior, Death of a Toreno, Grand Pas Tzigane.*
Programme for 3rd week: *L'Epoque Romantique, Le Chevalier et la Princesse, Romeo and Juliet, Faith and Strength, Mazurka, Grand Pas Hongroise, Sylvia Pas de Deux.*
Programme for 4th week: To be announced.

CARMEN AMAYA AND HER SPANISH COMPANY
at the Westminster Theatre, London

PILAR LOPEZ AND HER BALLET ESPANOL
at Princes Theatre, London, May 12 (confirm with daily press for full details).

ANTONIO AND HIS SPANISH BALLET
Provincial Tour

May
15 The New Theatre, Oxford
25 The Hippodrome, Birmingham
June
1 The Palace Theatre, Manchester (2 weeks)

SUSANNA AND JOSE
at the Sadler's Wells Theatre, May 11 for 2 weeks.

MAURICE BEJART BALLET THEATRE
at the Sadler's Wells Theatre, July 13 for two weeks

MARINA SVETLOVA CONCERT GROUP

April
23 The Kursal, Southend
24 The Essoldo Theatre, Brighton
27 The Assembly Hall, Tonbridge Wells
28 The de Montfort Hall, Leicester
29 The Rialto Concert Hall, York
30 The City Hall, Newcastle-upon-Tyne
May
6 Colston Hall, Bristol
6 The Theatre Royal, Norwich
7 Essoldo Garrick Theatre, Southport

SUNDAY BALLET CLUB
at Wyndhams Theatre, London, on April 26, at 8 p.m.

ASSOCIATION OF BALLET CLUBS
at the Rudolf Steiner Hall, London, on May 2, at 7.30 p.m.

Ballets by the Bristol, Enfield and Lewisham Ballet Clubs, the Irish Ballet Society and the Newcastle Phoenix Ballet Group.

INTERNATIONAL DANCE FESTIVALS

The following have already announced that there will be ballet in their festivals. Details to be published when available.

WIESBADEN : May 7-June 7.
FLORENCE : May 10-July 14. Four ballets by Aurel Milloss. May 10, 12, 17, *I Sette Peccati.* June 25, 27, 28, *L'Isola Eterna, La Follia D'Orlando, Katica*
PRAGUE : May 12-June 3. Ballet of the National Theatre of Prague in *Othello* and *Doktor Faust*
BORDEAUX : May 19-June 3. London's Festival Ballet and the Ballet of the Grand Theatre of Bordeaux
COPENHAGEN : 10th Danish Ballet Festival, May 18-31
Repertoire: *La Sylphides, Coppélia, Romeo and Juliet, Apollon Musagète, Harlequinade, Miss Julie, Giselle, Etudes, Moon Reindeer*
STOCKHOLM : May 31-June 13. The Royal Swedish Ballet in *Prometheus, The Moon Reindeer, Swedish Rhapsody*
ZURICH : June 2-July 5. London's Festival Ballet on June 11-14 in *Giselle* (with Markova) and other ballets
STRASBOURG : June 5-18. Ballets de Strasbourg with Shorik and Algaroff in *Cinderella* on June 6 and 7
SPOLETO : June 11-July 12. Jerome Robbins' Ballets U.S.A.
HOLLAND : June 15-July 15. Ballet Espagnol of Jose Greco
DUBLIN : June 14-21. Antonio and his Spanish Ballet (June 15-20)
GRANADA : June 20-July 1. Programmes of classical ballet with international stars
DUBROVNIK : July 1-Aug. 31 Yugoslav Folklore Groups
BREGENZ : July 21-Aug. 19. The Vienna State Opera Ballet in *Don Juan, Medusa* and other works
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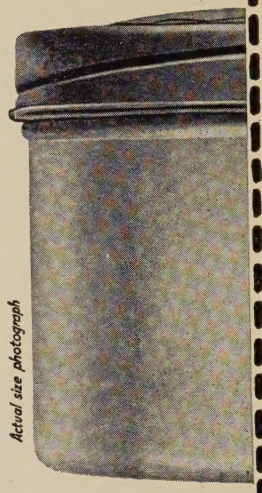

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